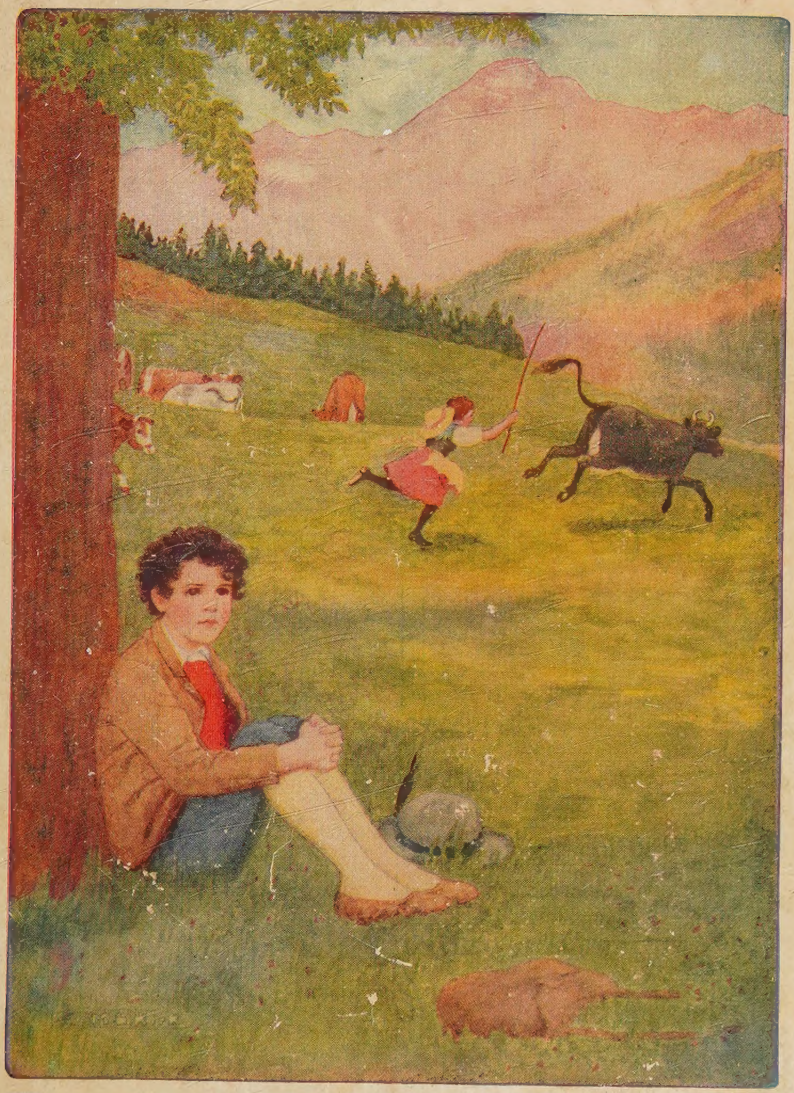
VINZI

By the Author of "Heidi"



Johanna Spyri

To Carlyn Tormollen

From Aunt Ann

1930

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VINZI

A STORY OF THE SWISS ALPS

By JOHANNA SPYRI

AUTHOR OF

"Heidi," "Mäzli," "Dora," "Cornelli," etc.

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CHAPTER I

IN LEUK

THE June sun was streaming down upon the green slope above the village of Leuk, and the fresh green grass which covered the heights as far as the eye could see filled the air with fragrance. At an isolated house along the path which led to the baths of Leuk, two women were lost in lively talk; indeed it seemed as if they could never come to the end of everything they had to say to each other.

"Yes, Marianna," said the more talkative of the two, "if you could furnish a couple of rooms the way I did, you would soon realize a good profit. You could soon get boarders among the people who have relatives at the baths. You know some of them do not want to go there, or are not allowed to, just like the three who are staying with me. You really are a little too far down, for people like to go a little higher up in the summer. If only you were living where those people over there do. They certainly have the best spot on the slope and own all the very best

meadows. But I do not think much of them," the woman concluded with an unfriendly glance toward the house which stood a little higher up and away from the road. " They are nearly eaten up with pride, especially she, and you ought to see her."

" In what way do they show it?" Marianna asked.

" In what way? You might just as well ask in what way they don't show it," Magdalene replied quickly. " They show it in everything. In everything they do and in the way they dress as if it were always Sunday with them. She has brought up the children to be just as particular as she is. The boy's black hair is always curled as if he were going to the church fair and the little one always carries her nose high in the air as if she meant to say, ' Watch out, here I come!' "

" How can the little one help it if her nose has grown that way?" was Marianna's opinion. " And the boy can't help his curly hair either. Doesn't the woman speak to you when you meet her?"

" Oh yes, she does, and I would not exactly advise her to let her pride go as far as that," said Magdalene in a threatening manner, " but you

are mistaken if you imagine that she ever stops a minute to say a few words to a neighbor. If one starts to talk with her, she just gives a short answer and hurries away as if she did not think one her equal. She can wait awhile before I ever say anything to her again."

Marianna looked at the house in question and exclaimed full of astonishment, "How is that? As long as I can remember, the house over there looked old and gray, not a window was ever opened, and all the panes were dirty and dull from age. It looked like a robber's den. Now it is snow-white and the windows shine in the sun. It can't be the same house!"

"It certainly is! Now you can see how proud they are," replied Magdalene eagerly. "Old farmer Lesa lived there with his old housekeeper more than fifty years; all that time he did not hammer in a single nail, for he was satisfied with the way it had been in his father's and his grandfather's time. Just as soon as his eyes were closed, his heir came across the Gemmi * and things were torn down, cleaned and renewed until one might think a count was moving in. Of course

* The Gemmi is a remarkable mountain pass across the Alps.

the woman was the cause of it all, for nothing that the parents had admired was good enough for her."

"But I should think that it was not unnecessary to clean and straighten up a bit if the last owner had not fixed up a nail in the house for fifty years and had let things go as his father and grandfather had left them," replied Marianna. "The old house certainly was ugly, and how changed it is! Why did you say that his heir came from across the Gemmi? Are the Lesas not from our parts?"

"Yes, they are, and there are several of that name hereabouts," replied Magdalene, "but one of them is supposed to have married across the Gemmi and to have stayed there with his wife near Berne or Freiburg. But I only know this from hearsay, for it was either a hundred or two hundred years ago. When old Lesa died, it was found that his nearest relatives were the same we were talking of, so it happened that Vinzenz Lesa moved here with his wife and two children about two years ago. I heard that there too they have a fine house and a lot of cows, and that their pastures over there are very fine, as well as their

breed of cattle. I think Vinzenz's brother now takes care of the other place. I do not know whether Vinzenz is going back there again when he has put everything here in good shape, nor whether he means to sell this place, for he does not say much."

"Dear me, I must go," Marianna exclaimed, quite startled when she heard the sound of a bell from the village below. "I have to go up to the baths, and I must not get back too late, because my husband and the children don't like to be kept waiting for supper. Where did old Lesa's housekeeper go?"

"She was his cousin and died a short time after him," Magdalene informed her. "She had been with him fifty years and was well past seventy, so she could not very well have started on anything new. Look, there they come towards us across the meadow. Now you can see for yourself Lesa's wife and her dressed-up children; just wait till she comes."

Marianna needed no further urging for she was curious to see the people they had been discussing.

They were coming close, and one could see that the children had a great deal to tell their

mother. They talked to her steadily so that one might have thought the woman could not possibly see or hear anything else. As soon, however, as she reached the house where the two women had withdrawn a little into the open doorway, she greeted them pleasantly. The boy immediately pulled off his cap and the girl called out " Good-day " with a ringing voice. When they had gone a few steps further, their lively conversation began anew.

" I must say they look nice," said Marianna, gazing after the group with visible satisfaction. " I see no pride there, Magdalene, but neatness and cleanliness in the children as well as in the mother. Everything looks well on her and I wonder how she does it. She just wore what we do, only it looks better on her. Didn't the boy's black curls tumble out from his cap in a nice way! And I like the way the little one with the snub nose has her brown hair braided about her head. She looks as bright and happy as a little bird."

" What else have you to say?" retorted Magdalene, slightly annoyed.

" You are right; I should do better to go my way instead of idly talking," said Marianna, getting ready to leave. " It does one good to see

people who teach their children good manners and keep them as if they meant to make them into something decent. There are too many of the other kind, and one often wonders if it is possible to raise children to anything good. That woman has given me a mind to imitate her as far as I can, for I'd like my children to look as nice and speak as politely as hers. I must go now. Do not take amiss anything I said. Good-bye, Magdalene."

Marianna set out now and hurried along towards the height. Mrs. Lesa in the meantime climbed up the mountain slope with her children. They kept on talking steadily, sometimes the boy alone or the girl, and sometimes both at once.

"Just think, mother," the boy informed her, "the child is hardly any bigger than Stefeli. When we passed Mrs. Troll's house yesterday evening we first saw her standing before the door, then she ran into the house and suddenly we heard the most beautiful music through the open window. I asked the brother who had stayed outside with a book what it was and he said, 'Alida is playing the piano.' Imagine, such a young child! I should have loved to listen a while, but I was afraid to, because Stefeli said that it was late and we had to go home."

"And so it was," Stefeli affirmed. "I should have loved to stay, too, but we had to go home. Don't you remember, father was already at table when we came? I found out that the boy's name is Hugo and that the crooked lady lives with them, because I heard Alida say to her brother, 'I simply have to go in now, otherwise Fraulein will fetch me in and everything will go crooked.'"

"No, no, Stefeli, it was not meant that way," said the mother. "I don't think the lady is crooked. The idea probably was that things would go crooked with Alida if she did not obey. Are not the children's parents with them?"

"No I don't think so, but I am not sure. What do you think, Vinzi?" asked Stefeli, turning toward her brother.

He gave no answer.

"What makes you stare into the distance, Vinzi, and why don't you answer?" now asked the mother.

"Listen, mother, listen!" Vinzi replied in a low voice. "Can you hear those beautiful sounds?"

The mother stood still. The wind was wafting up the sounds of an evening bell from the valley, which, as they reached the heights, faded away only to rise more loudly from far below.

The wind must have come straight from that direction, for one could hear them very plainly. Now the tones had died away.

The mother's glance rested on the boy with a mingled look of anxiety and surprise, while he was lost in listening. She remained quiet a while longer for Vinzi had not yet moved. He still seemed to listen eagerly to something he heard from far away, despite the fact that no more sounds reached her ear.

"Vinzi, can you hear us again now?" Stefeli asked, not in the least surprised at her brother's ways.

"Yes," he responded as if awakening from a dream.

"Is the lady who lives with Alida and Hugo really crooked?" asked Stefeli, for she was anxious to have that question cleared up.

"Yes, perhaps," the brother replied with a slightly abstracted air.

But Stefeli did not tolerate such uncertainty.

"If she is not crooked, she is straight, but you must not say perhaps," she exclaimed, a little angry. "We can easily go down right away to Mrs. Troll's house, can't we, mother, and then we'll find out what the lady is like."

" No," replied the mother, " we shall certainly not go back to the house on account of that. It is, however, time to turn back, otherwise father will get home sooner than we do and that must not happen. We had better return the way we came, it is the shortest way. But, Stefeli, you must not think that we'll stop at Mrs. Troll's house till we see those people."

" They may be sitting in front of the house," said Stefeli, holding fast to her intention.

As the mother turned back the little girl ran ahead; she wanted to see the house as soon as possible in order to discover anybody who might be sitting there. The question they had been discussing was not however the only thing on her mind. Stefeli longed most of all to see the two strange children who had moved into the house and whom she had seen the evening before.

Vinzi quietly wandered along at his mother's side. He was not talkative any longer, but his mother was well accustomed to these changes in her boy.

" Tell me, Vinzi," she asked now, " why did you keep on listening after the sound of the evening bells had died away? "

" I could still hear them," Vinzi answered.

" I suddenly heard such a wonderful song, which came down from the hills; the black fir trees seemed to join in with a deep bass and through it all the bells were tinkling their sparkling melody. Oh, it was beautiful! If only I could repeat it! "

" Wasn't it a song you have heard before? " the mother asked sympathetically, seeking to understand. " If you sang me part of it I might find out which song you mean and tell you the words of it."

" No, no," Vinzi remonstrated, " it is no song I ever heard. The melodies were all entirely new. I still hear them but can't repeat them."

Meditating deeply the mother remained silent, for she could not understand what Vinzi meant. She herself had always found much pleasure in music and singing. She had taught her children to sing as soon as they were able to talk, and her boy had always enjoyed their daily evening song.

" Come, Vinzi," she said at last, " let us sing a song now; then we'll both feel happy again. Which one do you want to sing?"

" I don't know, mother; if only I could sing the tune I hear," he answered.

" I suppose you have some music running in your head. Sing out and you can't help enjoying it," said the mother, starting up a song Vinzi knew well.

At first he hesitated, but soon the well-known melody carried him along. His clear, sure voice joining hers, they finished the song before they reached Mrs. Troll's cottage. Stefeli suddenly leaped forward from behind a tree, from which hidden spot she had watched the two children who were both sitting in front of the house with a book. It had not escaped Stefeli that Alida did not look much at her book and was constantly turning her head from side to side to see what might be going on. Stefeli was dreadfully anxious to run over to Alida and start a friendship with her. But suddenly the governess, who was not crooked at all, but on the contrary very stiff and straight, came out of the house. This intimidated Stefeli so much she hid further and further behind the tree in order not to be discovered. Stefeli told her mother and brother of these things and was glad to have them by her side when passing the house, because the governess was still sitting there. When closer, all four children eagerly

examined each other, for they were very much interested.

"They are the same ones we saw yesterday," Alida said with half-raised voice. "I think I'll go over and make their acquaintance."

"Indeed you won't Alida! We don't even know who they are," quickly replied the governess.

Despite the fact that the words had been spoken under her breath, those who were passing had been able to hear them.

"She doesn't want Alida to talk with us, did you hear it, mother?" said Stefeli when they had gone a little further.

"Yes, I did," the mother replied. "It is lucky that you didn't run over to them. You must never do it, Stefeli; do you hear?"

"Yes, but then we'll never meet and Alida wanted to so much," Stefeli said rebelliously.

"You see, Stefeli, the governess probably has charge of the children's education and is responsible for what they do and with whom they play. They might hear and learn from others all kinds of things that they shouldn't do," the mother explained. "Maybe Alida is a little like you, Stefeli, and likes to stick her little nose into

every opening and look through every hole in a hedge. That is probably why the governess has to watch her and choose her friends very carefully."

This made Stefeli more eager than ever to meet Alida and be her friend.

"I see father over there," said Vinzi. "We ought to hurry if we want to get home at the same time as he does."

This was the mother's intention, and, walking fast, they joined the father not far from the house. Soon afterwards the little family sat down to supper in their comfortable room.

The meal passed very quietly because the children knew that they had to be silent, and the parents themselves said little. As soon as the children had finished, Vinzi asked, "Can we go out?" As the request was readily granted, they hurried over to the barn, where many delightful corners could be found for playing hide and seek.

It was a bright, warm June evening. Vinzenz Lesa had leisurely risen from the table, and going out he lit his pipe and settled himself on the bench before the house. His wife soon afterwards came out and sat down, too. Now he grew talkative and told her of a visit he had made to an acquaintance of his in the valley whose

meadows, fields and cattle he had examined. He had compared his own property with what he saw, and when he had thoroughly looked everything over he could not help saying to himself, "Vinzenz Lesa, you are blessed with a fine property."

"Yes, we certainly ought to be grateful and I am sure we are," said his wife.

"Yes, it is true," he continued, "but whenever I am very happy about it and begin to plan how to improve and develop the farm it always seems as if some one were throwing an obstacle before my feet and keeping me from going further. I mean Vinzi. For whom should I do all of it if not for him, and what kind of a boy is he? He has no eyes in his head and shows not the slightest pleasure or interest in taking to pasture the most beautiful cows that can be found far and wide in the whole neighborhood. If I say to him, 'Just look what wonderful fodder is in this meadow!' he says 'yes' and stares into the distance so one can see that he has neither listened nor really looked at the meadow he is standing in. I am afraid there is something wrong with him."

"No, no, Vinzenz, you must not say that," his wife interrupted eagerly. "If Vinzi does not

always listen and has his thoughts elsewhere and does not show the real pleasure he should have in farming, he has never done anything wrong. You must not say that."

"I don't say it," the man went on, "but what is wrong is wrong, and when a boy has no feeling for such meadows, fields and cows as we own, and everything connected with a farm, something must be wrong. But I am sure I don't know how to help it."

"He may yet change; just think how young he is!" said the wife comfortingly, though her secret anxiety about the boy had grown again that day during her stroll. She knew well enough that there was something about the boy difficult to understand and she also realized that his thoughts never were on the objects before him. Deeming it wise to change the subject, she talked about seeing the strangers who had taken the upstairs rooms at Mrs. Troll's cottage for the summer. She told him that the children had looked so nice that she would not mind taking them into her own home. This might easily be managed in their big house, where a few nice rooms could be fitted up for that purpose.

"Well, what on earth will you say next, and

can't we even have peace in our own house?" said the man, half frightened, half angry. "Why should we take other people's children into our house when we have children of our own?"

"If they are as nice as those we saw, and as well brought up, ours could only learn good things from them," answered the woman. "We all like to see our children clean and well-behaved rather than tumbling about like little pigs and using rough words."

"Oh, well, all children have bad manners, and when they get too bad one can let them know. I know quite well what you are aiming at, but you might just as well give it up because there is no use," the farmer said. "I shall not tolerate strangers in the house. I mean to live by myself and I absolutely forbid the children to have anything to do with those city folks. Don't let them go over there or our girl will soon become as spoilt as the boy. I am glad to say she is still different from him. She runs after the cows and strokes them like friends and the young cattle run after her, eat from her hand and rub their heads against her like comrades. If one says anything, the child pays attention and minds her business and uses her own eyes besides. She knows exactly what is lacking in the barn or

stable and knows how everything should be. But the boy neither sees nor knows anything. It would be quite different if I could change those two around, make the girl into the boy, and the boy into the girl. But as long as things have to be as they are, I have no inclination to have her changed, too."

" The way you talk, Vinzenz, one might think you consider it a sickness to be well brought up," the woman replied calmly. " But you need have no fears; a governess is looking after those children who is going to see to it that hers don't come near ours. It is late, we had better go in now."

At the same time she called to the children to sing their daily evening song. As soon as they arrived the mother began, and both joined in with clear, sure voices. They knew the song well and each apparently had a good ear for music. Even as little children they had been able to repeat the mother's songs correctly. As the beautiful melody was resounding through the calm, peaceful evening air, father Vinzenz regained his usual composure, which had been so disturbed that day by anxious thoughts and fears.

CHAPTER II

ON THE PASTURE

THE children had no school during the summer months because at that time they were all needed for light tasks in the fields and meadows. School began again late in the autumn.

On Monday morning the sun had only just flushed the tops of the mountains before rising above the wooded heights, when, early as it was, Stefeli, already neatly washed and dressed, rushed into Vinzi's little chamber. She found him still fast asleep.

"Wake up, Vinzi," she cried out. "The man has just brought back the cows from the pond and as soon as we have had breakfast, father wants us to go up to the pasture to watch them. The man has to come back when we get there. We'll take lunch with us and stay all day long because it's too far to come all the way home. Won't we have fun eating out of doors? Please hurry."

Vinzi had awakened meanwhile. When he

gazed at his sister with his large dark eyes he still seemed lost in revery.

" Oh, I had such a wonderful dream," he said. " Mother and I were in Litten, the place we went to last year. We went to church together and everything was exactly as we had seen it then. An organ was playing the most beautiful piece and it was more wonderful than I could tell you. Do you know what an organ sounds like?"

" Oh, Vinzi, you must come now. Please hurry up and don't talk about an organ now," Stefeli urged. " Mother has already taken in the coffee and father is having breakfast. You know we won't have any fun if father gets cross. Do hurry up."

With these words Stefeli ran away.

Vinzi had realized the truth of his sister's words. He quickly jumped out of bed and completed his necessary toilet. Soon he stood in the room ready to start off. He speedily swallowed his milk and coffee and stuck the bread into his pocket, before the three others had half finished theirs. The father, looking at the boy, thought to himself, " He can hurry if he wants to. Perhaps something can still be done with him." The mother had packed the children's lunch neatly

into a bag, which she hung around Vinzi's shoulder. Stefeli now came skipping along with a straw hat on her head and in her hand a rod which Vinzi had cut for her. This she used for gently urging the cows ahead whenever they needed it, but she never beat them. When the children went out, followed by the parents, Vinzi discovered that he had left his whip in the barn. All cow-herds carried one in order just for fun to flick it sharply from time to time. A sound like thunder would re-echo from the mountains roundabout. As Vinzi did not care for this pastime with the whip he regularly forgot where he had put it. While he hunted about uncertainly his father began to frown. But suddenly, in leaps and bounds, his sister, who had noticed where he had left it, appeared with the whip.

At last the children started off. "Keep the cows from going across the stream, Vinzi," the father called after them.

"Take care not to go too near the rushing stream yourselves," was the mother's last reminder.

"Yes, yes," the children called back gaily, as they hurried along towards the mountain pasture. As soon as they arrived Stefeli began to shout

violently. She had not forgotten that their man was to return to the farm as soon as they had arrived to take charge of the cows. He did not hear for quite a while because he happened to be on the other side of the roaring stream. Stefeli, however, did not give up till he had heard and understood her cries. He then hurried away.

" We have to see that the cows stay on our own pasture and that Schwärzeli does not jump about too much, for if she doesn't eat she'll get thin," said Stefeli. " Come, Vinzi, let's sit down over there under the tree; for if we leave our bag in the sun, the bread will get dry."

Vinzi, who had already settled down, got up. He followed Stefeli, watching her while she carefully laid their provisions in the shadow of the broadest branches. Then they both sat down in the cool shade under the spreading tree where earlier the ground had been thoroughly dried by the sun.

The fresh morning wind was soughing through the branches and blowing over the pasture far and wide till its roaring was finally lost in the distance. Suddenly Stefeli bounded up and shot away like an arrow. With tail raised high the shiny black cow was going in big leaps towards

the rushing stream. "Schwärzeli, Schwärzeli," the child called repeatedly, "Schwärzeli, please wait for me!" But the high-spirited animal only jumped higher and had nearly reached the stream. "She will drown if she jumps in," thought Stefeli, terribly frightened. By that time they had come to the dangerous place of which the mother had warned her. "Schwärzeli!" the child called once more with so much authority in her excited voice that far and wide her echo repeated, "Schwärzeli, Schwärzeli!"

Suddenly the fugitive stood still and turned around, while Stefeli rushed breathlessly towards the young heifer, who was quietly awaiting the arrival of her mistress.

"You are a bad Schwärzeli to scare me so," Stefeli exclaimed, firmly grasping the rope about Schwärzeli's neck, on which a little bell was fastened. "Just wait! If you go on like this I certainly won't bring you any more salt to lick. You know you love it as if it were good sugar!" Schwärzeli was tenderly rubbing her head on Stefeli's shoulder now as if to say, "I meant no harm, but it is such fun to caper across the meadow."

"Yes, yes," Stefeli answered, as if she had

understood everything Schwärzeli had been trying to express, " you want me to forgive you now, but stop running towards the stream. You can run towards the other side all you want. Oh, I see, you think it more fun to run downhill than uphill. I know. Come along with me."

As the two wandered peacefully back to the place which was meant to be the pasture of the day, Vinzi met them half way. Quite surprised, he asked, " But Stefeli, why did you run away? It was so nice under the tree. I was hearing the most beautiful music. I was just going to ask you if you heard it too, when I found you were gone. Only then I saw you coming back with Schwärzeli."

Despite being used to her brother's ways, Stefeli could not help being astonished that he had not been aware of what was going on. She told him about the chase and her great fear that Schwärzeli might gallop straight towards the stream, fall down the banks and drown. It was lucky that the little beast had suddenly become manageable. Stefeli was eager to know what Vinzi had heard in the meanwhile.

" Oh, it is such a shame you did not hear it," he said, " for one can hardly describe such music.

A chorus of deep, strong voices was rising from the tree above me and floating far across the meadow. Then high, clear voices joined in and were lost in the distance till they resembled the sounds of waters far away. Oh, it was so beautiful. Come, we might still hear it if we go back."

"Go now, Schwärzeli, and behave yourself," said Stefeli, letting go of the rope by which she had held the heifer. Then she followed Vinzi.

But she had scarcely settled down beside Vinzi when both jumped up again. They noticed simultaneously that the brown cow had strolled as far as a fence which formed the boundary between their own and another pasture. In order to get through she was pushing hard against the boards. Soon the children had fetched her back and the cow was slowly wandering to the proper field. Stefeli discovered an especially inviting spot where fragrant mountain pinks were nodding in the grass. "Come, Vinzi, we'll stay here. I am sure we couldn't possibly hear the tunes any more." To this Vinzi gladly assented. A great peace enveloped the heights, and the cows were quietly wandering about. Schwärzeli was usually either at the head or the rear of them, but

she gave no more disorderly leaps. Only when changing ground she trotted about a bit.

The children looked with happy faces at the lovely scene before them. After enjoying it silently for a while, Stefeli said, "I should just love to be a cow-herd all my life. Would you like it, too, Vinzi?"

"No, I should not like it," was his answer.

"But why not?" Stefeli questioned a little reproachfully. "It couldn't anywhere be more beautiful than here."

"Yes, that's true," Vinzi admitted, "but I should not like to take care of cows all my life. I should like another profession better than watching them and keeping them from running away."

"What would you rather do?" Stefeli wanted to know.

After meditating a little Vinzi answered, "I don't know what the profession is in which I could do what I like best of all."

"What do you like to do best? I never saw you do it, I think," Stefeli said, quite surprised that she should not know.

"I like above all to listen to the bells and all the sounds in the branches of the trees. Also

those that drift down from the mountains on all sides. Can you hear how it seems to sing everywhere about us? Can you hear it?" Vinzi's eyes grew more large and gleaming while he listened.

Stefeli pricked up her ears. "Those are only the gnats," she said in a slightly disdainful voice.

But Vinzi, continued: "When I hear such beautiful sounds I always try to remember them so that I can sing them or imitate them. I wonder how I could do it."

"But that couldn't be a real profession," Stefeli interrupted him.

"That's what I am afraid of, too," Vinzi admitted, quite discouraged, "but I can't help thinking about it all the time. I have cut so many pipes and have tried out what one can play on them. I already have made five; on one I can blow very deep, and on another very high tones, and the others can play middle tones. I was just puzzling out how to play two or three at the same time, so that they could all sound at once like the church bells."

"You might become a piper," Stefeli exclaimed, quite happy over her inspiration, "that might be quite a good profession."

"I don't know," Vinzi replied uncertainly.

" Father would surely not let me, even if I could. He found my pipes in the barn one day and threw them all away. He told me to think of useful things instead of collecting pipes and thinking about such rubbish." Poor Vinzi was quite depressed at those memories and it smote Stefeli's heart.

" You mustn't get sad on account of that, Vinzi," she said comfortingly. " I am sure father just meant you not to have the pipes at home in the barn and stable. But why shouldn't you have them up here in the pasture and think about them. I can easily watch and call out when I need you. Then you can go on cutting your pipes and we can put them into a hole under a tree and take them out when we are up here. I could help you blow them. I'll blow the high one and you can play the low one and they'll sound together like the bells."

But these words failed to give Vinzi thorough consolation. He kept sadly staring at the ground before him and saying nothing more.

" Let's talk about something else, now," his sister said decidedly, for she did not like the effect their conversation had had on Vinzi. But before another subject was begun Stefeli started up

violently, and calling her brother, flew away. Vinzi, glancing up, ran after her toward a party of strangers, who had been going over a narrow wooden bridge which led across the stream, when a little dog belonging to them suddenly darted into the midst of the cows and yelping loudly, drove them in every direction. The scared animals rushed hither and thither in their fright, and Schwärzeli, with her tail raised high, was galloping to and fro. This urged the dog to still more furious onslaughts. Stefeli rushed after the cows to quiet them, while Vinzi, going straight up to the dog, applied his whip so vigorously that the animal turned about and ran whining after the party. All this had proved to be such hot work that the children sought together the welcome shade under the big tree and flung themselves down there. They felt in need of regaining their breath and cooling off under the deliciously swaying branches. The cows also were peaceful again.

" I wish the dog had been on the side where the path leads up to the pasture," Vinzi said now, sitting up. " I saw the most brilliant red flower there and it looked perfectly enormous, even from where I was. I never saw a bigger one; I'd run

down to get it if it were not so far away. It is getting very hot."

"Oh, I can find it," Stefeli said with determination. "If the flower is so wonderful I won't mind going so far."

Vinzi was just going to declare himself willing to fetch the flower for Stefeli, when the latter sped away so fast that the boy could not possibly have caught up with her. Therefore he stayed seated and as the noon-day bell was ringing in the village below, he forgot everything else in listening to its sounds.

"Here is your flower," a voice suddenly said beside him as Stefeli laid a brilliant red cloth before her brother. Having been lost in deep thoughts he had not noticed how the time had passed and he could not wonder enough at Stefeli's speedy return. He meditatively looked at what he had imagined to be a flower. It had the same deep red the flower had had, but he could not help wondering where he had seen that cloth before. "Oh, I know now," he exclaimed suddenly, "I saw it on the chair near Mrs. Troll's house where the little girl was. It must belong to her."

Stefeli also remembered having seen a red ob-

ject there and besides that she had seen some children in the party near the bridge. They must have been the same children. Vinzi began to consider what to do with the cloth, and as it was best to immediately return to the owner whatever was found, he wanted to run right over to Mrs. Troll's house and take it along. But Stefeli would not hear of this, because dinner time had come for everyone and there was plenty of time in which to do it later. As soon as Stefeli mentioned lunch, Vinzi suddenly felt how immensely hungry he was and saw that his sister was right. He set to work and gathering thin, dry sticks from under the tree, built a little fire and lit it. As the wood was very dry, the flames leaped up gaily. Stefeli had transformed the grassy ground into an appetizing dinner table, set with two large slices of buttered bread and two snow white eggs which their mother had cooked at home, and which only needed peeling. Stefeli brought the bag near the fire and only waited for the right moment when the wood had burnt low to put the clean round potatoes one after another into the coals. Soon they smoked and sizzled so invitingly that the children were glad when, with a willow stick, they could lift them out of the glow-

ing ashes. As soon as the potatoes had cooled off a bit, the children heartily bit into them and ate them all, including the firmly-baked crust, which was really the best part. They did not despise the rest of their lunch, and Vinzi attacked his bread and butter vigorously, while Stefeli heartily enjoyed her egg. All morning the cows had been pasturing busily, so the time had come for them also to rest a bit. One after the other they lay down on a fine, sunny spot. Even Schwärzeli had settled down, but her little black head moved from side to side in a lively manner which showed that one could not yet quite trust her to be quiet.

The children had neatly cleaned up their place under the tree, for egg-shells and scraps of paper were not to be left on the fine green carpet of their living room. Looking out over the pasture, they were happily enjoying the deep peace about them.

"I might take the shawl back now," said Vinzi after a while. "Don't you think the cows will stay quiet till I come back?"

"Yes, I think so," Stefeli replied. "The big ones are sure to lie down for a while, and if Schwärzeli begins to jump about and wants to run towards the stream, I can lure her here. I

kept the salt mother gave us for our eggs, we both took none and Schwärzeli just loves it."

Vinzi took up the red shawl which Stefeli had neatly folded up and ran away. Despite his speed it was a good quarter of an hour before he stood in front of Mrs. Troll's house. The front door was open and everything in the house was still. Somebody was apparently hoeing in the garden, it was probably Mrs. Troll herself. Suddenly, however, quite different sounds drew the boy irresistibly up the stairs. Through a half-open door quite near at hand he caught a delightful, gay melody. Walking up close he laid his ear on the door to listen. But as Vinzi, in his desire to hear, had strongly pushed his head against it, it suddenly flew wide open. As soon as the little musician, who was sitting on a high stool before the instrument, saw Vinzi, she sprang up and went to him.

"Oh, did you find my shawl? How quickly you have brought it back!" she called out, spying the shawl in Vinzi's hand. "It's lucky for me because Miss Landrat has already scolded me for losing it. As punishment for my carelessness I was to go all the way back where papa and the other gentleman took us this morning. I was to

look for it, but as it was so far she refused to go along. I'll give you some reward for finding it. What would you like to have? "

Vinzi was still gazing full of surprise at the wonder-child, who had played such gorgeous music and was now talking to him exactly as if she had known him a long, long time. Hesitating with his answer, he finally asked a little shyly, " Can I really say what I want? "

" Certainly," his new acquaintance replied firmly. " But you know," she continued, " only ask for something I can really give you, not perhaps a boat or a real, live horse."

" Oh, no, I don't mean anything like that. I only want to hear the music again."

" The music? Do you mean the piece I was playing when you came in? But I don't call that a present. What is your name? " the girl suddenly changed her line of thought.

" Vinzi," he informed her.

" Is it? My name is Alida Thornau," she continued. " When I have to practice I find it so dreadfully tiresome that I always play a little piece between whiles. Do you have to practice, too? "

" What is practicing? " asked Vinzi.

" Oh, you are lucky if you don't know what that is," Alida exclaimed. " You see, practicing is sitting still on a round stool and playing up and down on a piano with your hands. This is called playing scales, and repeating the same tones about thirty times to and fro is called finger practice."

" Why do you have to practice? " asked Vinzi, wondering deeply.

" Because one has to obey," replied Alida, " and I have to practice every day from two to three o'clock because Miss Landrat tells me to. I have no lessons here the way I have in Hamburg. Every time father comes down here I have to promise him to obey Miss Landrat. He is up at the baths with my mother because she is ill."

" How did you learn to play that beautiful piece? " Vinzi inquired, following all her information with great interest.

" Oh, one can easily do that when one practices so much and knows the notes. All one has to do is to play the notes that are written there," was Alida's explanation.

" Oh, you are lucky to be allowed to practice so much," said Vinzi, gazing at the piano with such an expression of longing that

Alida suddenly remembered the reward he had been promised.

"I'll play you the piece now," she said. "Shut the door and come near to me so that you can hear it well."

Vinzi obeyed and expectantly posted himself behind the piano stool.

With an eagerness never before exhibited, Alida played her Spring Song through, never once stopping or hesitating till she came to the end. Never had such a thing happened before! To have such a keen listener had made her able to perform unusually well.

Vinzi stared at her fingers as if her playing were a miracle. In a mirror which hung over the piano Alida had seen how breathlessly he followed her. This pleased her and when she had finished the piece she began it all over again. In the midst of it she suddenly seemed to be struck by a new idea. She paused abruptly and turning about on her chair she asked, "Would you like to learn how to play the piano?"

Vinzi's eyes sparkled, but only for a moment; in the next he looked at the floor saying sadly, "Oh, I never could do it."

"Oh, yes, you could easily," replied Alida

with conviction. "I can teach you and you'll soon know all I know. You can practice with me and that will be heaps more fun than to sit and play here all alone. You can play a little piece like the one you like so much. It won't take you long. Do you want to?"

Vinzi's eyes had grown bigger and bigger with surprise and longing. The incomprehensible joy of playing music like that himself, lay suddenly before him. All he had to do was to say yes. Everything was to be so easy and perfectly natural. He could not believe that he might be granted such happiness.

But his great inner emotion kept him from uttering a sound.

"Why don't you say yes? I am sure you must want to if you like it so much," Alida said with slight impatience. "You can come here every day at two o'clock because Miss Landrat always takes a walk with Hugo at that time. I am supposed to practice till three and sometimes even longer if they happen to be away. Then we'll be quite alone and I can teach you everything. We can either play together or take turns."

When Vinzi saw it so clearly put before him it seemed at last possible. With a voice clearly

showing his delight he said, " There is nothing I should love better in this world."

" So now it's all settled that you come to me tomorrow," said Alida with satisfaction, " or do you want to begin today? "

However anxious Vinzi was to do so, he realized that he had already stayed away from Stefeli long enough. But he gladly gave his promise to come the next day, if nothing prevented him from doing so. He could hardly yet believe his good fortune, but Alida's sureness about the matter proved catching and he ran away in high glee. The thought of what Stefeli would say to the plan chiefly occupied his mind, as he ran along. Maybe she would refuse to be left alone each day and perhaps she would think their father might be angry if he knew. Therefore he still felt slightly uncertain.

When he reached the pasture he found everything in perfect order. The cows were lying on the self-same spots and Schwärzeli was wandering quietly about. He ran to Stefeli, who sat under a tree singing a song.

" What a long time you have been away," said Stefeli, interrupting her song. " What did she say? "

Vinzi, sitting down beside his sister, began to relate what had happened. She heard of the joyous prospect Alida had offered him, namely, to go to her an hour every day to practice. But he had not yet accepted because he did not know what Stefeli would say to being left alone for a whole hour every day.

Stefeli pondered for a moment. "You can easily do it, Vinzi," she said eagerly. "I know that it will please you more than anything."

"Oh, yes, I know it, too," said Vinzi with gleaming eyes. "Don't you think that there won't be much trouble with the cows at that time? They are still quiet."

"There won't be any," Stefeli reassured him. "All the time you were gone they lay still and looked around. Schwärzeli just walked about and it is like this every afternoon."

Vinzi had known it well, but was glad to have Stefeli's confirmation. Vinzi's new prospect had made the children talkative, and they discussed the coming events and their possible consequences. They could talk without any interruption, for the cows were feeding quietly again, as they were supposed to do. All at once the sound of horns could be heard from different

sides, warning them that the time had come to drive the cattle home to be milked.

Vinzi leaped up with surprise when he realized how quickly the evening had come. Stefeli took the bag on her arm and her stick in her hand and fetched Schwärzeli from where she was wandering about. Vinzi whistled and called his cows together and before long the children were on their way home with the little herd. The father was already waiting for them near the stable. On the days when the children had to go to the pasture with the cows their work was done for the day when they came home. As soon as their father returned from the stable they had supper, and soon after, when the mother had finished her tasks in the kitchen, she sat down to sing with them; after this they went to bed, and gladly, too, knowing that next morning another early start had to be made.

CHAPTER III

UNLOOKED-FOR EVENTS

AS soon as Vinzi was awake next morning he wished it were two o'clock right away, for he simply dreaded the long morning he had to live through before his lesson. But it went by much more quickly than he expected. A lot of running about had been necessary to keep the cows together, as they were always very lively at that time.

When lunch was over and the cows had settled down to rest, Vinzi looked steadily towards the mountains. Suddenly rising from the ground he said, "It must be two o'clock now. Yesterday the sun was just above that rocky peak when I got back. In an hour it will be above the peak."

"Yes, Vinzi. The sooner you go the sooner you'll be back. I want to hear all about it," said Stefeli.

Vinzi lost no time. As he was climbing up the steps at Mrs. Troll's he found Alida waiting for him. "You came at just the right time," she called to him; "they are both away and we'll

be entirely alone. You must always come at this time."

When Vinzi entered the room he glanced quickly at the clock. "I know exactly how high the sun must be when I leave," he said with satisfaction. "It is just ten minutes after two."

"Let's start in now," Alida proposed. "First, I'll tell you what the notes are called, and next, which of the keys one has to play on. After that you can begin."

She took up a little sheet of music and began to teach him. As Alida did not care to linger long over anything her instruction was rather hurried. But Vinzi had so attentively followed every word and had comprehended her so quickly, that his teacher proceeded as rapidly as she had wished.

"I'll show you the keys now. As soon as you play a bit you'll get to know the notes better," she said. Reading the notes to him had begun to seem extremely tiresome.

As she taught him the keys, Alida played them too in order to make the lesson more vivid.

Vinzi could not help wondering profoundly.

"How is the music made?" he asked suddenly.

"It is already made and printed in the book,

from which we can read and play it," answered Alida.

"But hasn't somebody made it up before others can play it?" asked Vinzi modestly. "Don't you think that one could write down tunes one hears inside one's head, if one only knew how? Then one could play it all on the piano."

"But that's not a bit necessary. I am quite sure that enough music has been written already," Alida said, glancing with a deep sigh at the large book in which were printed all the exercises she had to learn.

Vinzi was also looking at it, absolutely absorbed. The large black dots seemed to him nothing short of a miracle.

"Now I'll play you the little piece you liked so much," Alida continued. "Soon you'll be able to play it, too. It is awfully easy."

Vinzi's eyes glowed as he listened. He drank it in with all his senses.

Just as Alida had reached the end the black-forest clock on the wall struck three.

"The lesson is over, but come again tomorrow," said Alida jumping up from her chair.

Shaking hands, Vinzi quickly hurried away.

Three days passed in the same way. Vinzi proved such an apt pupil that his teacher could not help wondering at his progress. He had played the little piece through once, for he knew it by heart. Reading the notes still gave him trouble. When he had played it only with his index finger, Alida was much shocked. She forbade him ever to play that way again. No human being played like that, she said, for all five fingers of the hand were meant to be used in playing. But it had seemed a much easier way to Vinzi. In the end he saw how much better her way was as it was too difficult for the left hand to move quickly.

Vinzi was grateful for being sent to the pasture every day. It would have been hard for him to work with his father in the barn or stable, because his thoughts were so completely filled with his new studies that it always took him a moment to comprehend what people were saying to him. Once in a while when his father had needed him for little tasks he had shaken his head. " Well, where is your head nowadays, boy?" he had said as he sent him off.

The day had come for the fourth lesson. In happy anticipation Vinzi had been running and

was already half way up the stairs, when a sharp voice called to him from below, " Hey there, what does this mean? Come straight down, you forward boy."

" I am only going up to Alida," said Vinzi a little frightened.

" What, to Alida? You know no Alida here, and she does not know you, either," Mrs. Troll cried out indignantly. " Come down this minute or I'll fetch you down myself in a way you won't like at all."

Vinzi went down the stairs obediently, but not without calling out with all his might, " Alida, I am not allowed to come to you. But I want you to know that I was here."

" What are you saying?" said the woman furiously. " I see, you meant to fool me and make me think that you know the little girl whose name you happened to hear once? Look, here is the door."

But Alida, who had heard him, now came running down.

" Why do you send Vinzi away? He came to see me," she said in a superior tone.

" Oh, I see, the matter was arranged beforehand," said Mrs. Troll, but she used quite a dif-

ferent tone of voice now. "Does Miss Landrat know that he was expected?"

"No, but I know," Alida answered obstinately.

"If we tell Miss Landrat the matter will be settled," Mrs. Troll said with a shade of sarcasm. "But the best he can do now is to go where he belongs."

Vinzi couldn't help agreeing to that. Giving Alida his hand, he went sadly away with the conviction that everything was now over. Alida was filled with rage that the woman should be allowed to send her dear friend away like that.

"I'll tell father everything," she cried out passionately, "and he won't have Vinzi treated that way again." Her anger giving her wings, she flew up the stairs.

As soon as Mrs. Troll saw Miss Landrat approaching with Hugo she went out quickly and gave a thorough report of what had happened. "It is quite evident that the boy has been here before," she concluded her tale excitedly. "Everything was planned, for he shot up the stairs as if he were perfectly at home here. The girl was apparently waiting for him upstairs."

The governess was simply petrified.

"How could Alida presume to do such a thing? The idea of making friends with a cowherd whose father we know nothing about," she cried out with indignation. "I'll have to tell her parents."

"It might be the boy who found her shawl," said Hugo, who had kept quiet till then. "We saw him on Sunday with his sister. He looked very nice, and I don't see why Alida shouldn't be friends with him."

Miss Landrat had no words left to show her disapproval; turning about she went up the stairs. Hugo followed.

"Who came here while we were gone?" asked the governess, throwing open the door.

"Vinzi," replied Alida.

"If that is the boy's name who was here, I should like to know what brought him here," continued the lady in great agitation.

"He came to take a music lesson," was the answer.

"Do you think I am joking, Alida," said Miss Landrat, still more furious.

"No, I don't think so," replied the girl.

"Will you please give me a sensible answer!"

exclaimed the governess. "Why did it ever occur to you to ask the boy here? What did he want?"

"He wanted his music lesson," replied Alida, as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

"But why don't you tell me who wanted to give him a music lesson," Hugo interposed.

"I was to give it," Alida replied seriously.

Hugo exploded with laughter.

"Didn't he laugh at the idea of your giving him a music lesson?" he asked.

"No, he was very attentive," said Alida.

"This is enough!" exclaimed the governess angrily. "Do not ask anything more, Hugo. Alida is wrong if she thinks it funny to invent such rubbish. "I shall write to your papa at once. But before everything else I'll—" with this she left the room.

Hugo renewed his examination now. He heard to his great amusement that she had given Vinzi several lessons and that he had already learned much. Alida also wanted her brother to know that she fully meant to tell her papa how Vinzi had been treated by Mrs. Troll.

In the meantime Miss Landrat had sought out Mrs. Troll. She told her to send Vinzi away

if he ever should venture near the house again, and roundly to forbid him entering it.

The same evening Vinzi's father passed Mrs. Troll's house as he cut across the field on his way home. As she happened to be in her garden at the time she called out to him. "Hey there! neighbor Lesa, I have something to say to you."

He approached.

"I wonder," she continued, "if it would not be better for your boy if he had something to do, instead of running into other people's houses and getting into mischief."

"What do you mean, neighbor?" asked Lesa, pressing his lips together.

"You ask what I mean? Well, your boy has been here several times to amuse the little girl who boards here. They play music together and such stuff," said Mrs. Troll. "But the governess won't hear of it and the boy must stay where he belongs from now on."

"He'll stay there safe enough; good-bye," said Lesa, going his way.

At supper time he came home. Both children were seated at the table, because the mother liked to have everything ready for her husband. She immediately brought in the supper and sat down,

too. But he said nothing. Once in a while the mother looked questioningly at him, but as he took no notice she realized that something must have happened. Her husband apparently wished to be alone. Therefore as soon as the meal was done and she had finished the necessary tasks, the children were sent to bed. When Lesa found himself alone with his wife he said to her, " Sit down, I must talk to you."

She did as she was bid.

" I have had enough of the boy now," he began in quite a temper. " It is not enough that he does nothing, understands nothing, and can't be good for anything on the farm; now he even has to bring shame and dishonor upon us. This is the end now and I've made up my mind to send him away."

The woman had grown pale with fright.

" But for heaven's sake, what has Vinzi done? " she asked anxiously. " It is not a bit like him. What did he do, Vinzenz? Please tell me; did he really do some wrong? "

" Ask him yourself what he has done. It is enough for me to have to hear from a neighbor that it would be better for my boy to have something to do instead of running into other people's

houses and fooling around. That a thing like that should be said to me! Matters have gone on long enough now, and this is the end. I am simply going to send him away."

In his agitation Vinzenz Lesa had risen from his chair but after walking once across the room, he came back to his seat.

"I can't understand what has happened," said the woman, when he was sitting beside her again, after she had been able to think a little. "It certainly is not Vinzi's way to go into people's houses without a cause; there must have been a reason. Let us first talk to the boy and ask him why he did it, for it is not fair to judge him otherwise. He is sure to tell us the truth. But think, Vinzenz, what it would be to send away a twelve year old boy! He is much to young for that."

"I won't stop you from talking to him," replied the husband, "but one thing is clear. He simply has to go. I have thought of it for a long while and now the time has come. He must go to a place where there is no possible chance for him to hear such nonsense. He must go where there are few people, but the kind who get full pleasure from their work. I mean people who

stay by themselves and who do not sit together with strangers."

"But the first thing of all should be to know the people," the wife interrupted eagerly. "I hope you do not mean to send Vinzi to the first person who happens to like his work on a farm."

"Easy, easy, I am coming to that," the man continued in a calm voice. "You know that I went up to the Simplon last fall where a cousin of mine, Lorenz Lesa, lives. Well, he has a fine farm with a few splendid cows, and though it isn't big, everything is in excellent order. I liked it up there and I'll send the boy to him. Vinzi may still come out all right if he sees other boys who are happy and content in that kind of life."

"Is it really possible that you mean to send the boy so far away!" cried out the woman with a wail, "so high up into the mountains? It must be dreadfully lonely up there. I can't even imagine what things would be like. I don't know either your cousin or his wife. How could they be expected to receive the boy? You send him to them like a good-for-nothing with whom one can do nothing more at home. It would seem as if our Vinzi had become a criminal who had to be sent into banishment."

"You need not get excited, woman," retorted the man, "the change is not to be a punishment but a means of bringing him around. My cousin Lorenz is a good, sensible man who won't treat him badly, and Cousin Josepha is a splendid woman who is bringing up her three boys in such a way that it gives one pleasure to look at them. I saw them right in the midst of their cows and I never heard such singing and jokes and such cracking of whips. They seem to have an eternal holiday. Don't you believe yourself that our boy might change in such surroundings and realize how lucky he is to have been born to be a farmer? Nothing better could possibly happen to him than to go."

The woman said nothing more, but she was far from convinced that Vinzi would feel at home among boys so different. She could not help wondering what the cousins would think of Vinzi's rather odd ways. Many other thoughts disturbed her, but she knew how useless they were. Of course Vinzi had to go and she knew no other place to send him to. She asked her husband how soon they could hear whether their relations would take the boy, and when Vinzi would have to leave them. So her husband told

her that he had clearly shown Lorenz how he liked the boys and had admitted how much he wished his boy were happy and bright, too, instead of being so dreamy. Lorenz had asked him then and there to send Vinzi to him for a summer whenever he wanted to. In the gay company of the other boys he might wake up. Lorenz also promised to do his share, as happy boys appealed to him much more than obstinate ones.

So it had been settled between them that Vinzi was to go and that in return one of the three boys was to spend a summer with them. It would do him good to see a new place and different ways of working. Lesa believed that a man who lived in the valley was soon going to drive his cattle over the mountain and that would give them a good opportunity to send Vinzi.

The mother went to bed with a heavy heart that night. Vinzi was to be sent to perfect strangers into surroundings she did not know. Besides it was so far away that she could not even keep an eye on him. Why did it have to be? Another great sorrow was the thought that Vinzi must have done something to draw his father's discontent upon him. She hardly slept that night. As soon as it had grown bright the next

morning and before anyone in the house had wakened, she went into Vinzi's chamber. She wanted to have a quiet hour with the boy in order to hear what he had done. She also had to prepare him for what was to happen, for she realized that it would probably be very soon. Vinzi, opening his large, dark eyes, gazed with surprise at his mother. She was sitting on the edge of his bed, holding his hand in hers.

" Tell me, Vinzi," she began, " while nobody can disturb us, why you made father so angry yesterday. You had better tell me everything."

Vinzi had to think a little. He remembered how furiously Mrs. Troll had sent him away the day before and he supposed his father had heard about it. He told her the whole incident of the music lessons and how raging Mrs. Troll had grown, also how desirous Alida had been to continue the lessons.

A great load fell from the mother's heart when she found that Vinzi had done no wrong. She understood, however, that their neighbor's words had specially irritated her husband, because Vinzi had for a long while caused him secret anxiety and grief. She found it necessary to explain to her boy, how wrong it had been to

tell her nothing of the matter. She wondered if it had not occurred to him that nothing like that should have been begun without telling them at home. Vinzi here quite frankly admitted that he had been afraid of not getting his father's permission, and as he had been so dreadfully eager to learn something about music, he and Stefeli had talked it all over and had decided that it was a good time to leave the pasture. They had thought their father would not mind so long as nothing happened to the cows. But the mother said that his secrecy had not been right and was bringing bad consequences, though she hoped these might also lead to good. Here she spoke of his father's plan and their hope that Vinzi would learn to enjoy all the farm work his three cousins seemed to relish so much. She hoped he would heartily enter into everything with them and return bright and happy; which would make his father overjoyed. However delicately the mother had mentioned their decision, Vinzi had only heard the fact that he had to leave his home. The boy looked terror-stricken, but did not utter a word. The mother was glad enough that he did not complain, because his frightened face alone had brought the tears to her eyes.

Everything took its usual course that day. The children went up to the pasture again, and the cows, after they wandered about for a bit, had quietly settled down. Stefeli was quite accustomed to Vinzi's long silent spells, when he seemed to listen to all kinds of sounds she could not hear. But that day he went too far.

"Say something to me, Vinzi. You might just as well not be here at all," she finally said a little crossly.

"Oh yes, and I won't be here much longer. I can't help thinking of your being all alone when I can't come to the pasture any more," Vinzi said dolefully. Then Stefeli heard that he was to be sent up to a high mountain, to people he had never seen. She could not believe that anything so unheard-of could suddenly come to pass.

"When will you have to go?" she asked, wholly overcome by this dreadful change.

As his mother had not mentioned this, Vinzi did not know.

"Oh, I am glad," she cried out decidedly relieved, "it may not be for quite a while. And if it is put off a long while, it may never happen at all. Cheer up again, Vinzi."

Stefeli had a way of finding a consoling side

to everything and had often brightened Vinzi's despondent mood by her cheerful outlook. That day also the boy was affected by her words, and the sunny afternoon ended much more happily than it had begun.

When the children had gone to bed and the parents were sitting alone together Lesa told his wife that he had gone to the village that day and that when he had asked after his friend he had found that the latter had just that day driven his cows over the mountain. But there was no loss in that; on the contrary. He had at the same time heard of a young workman from Gondo who was going home to his village next Monday. As he would make the road from Brieg on foot, he expected to spend the night in Berisal on the way. This was much better, as Vinzi would not be obliged to make the whole journey on foot. Lesa also knew an innkeeper in Berisal who would provide good board for the travellers.

The woman, who had listened silently till now, here said, " How can you give our boy in charge of a person nobody knows anything about, except that he is going up the mountain."

" I immediately went to see him and talked it

all over," replied the father, "and I found him a good fellow. When I inquired about him I heard nothing but good of him. All Vinzi needs is to have a companion, for he can look after himself perfectly well. No boy is a little child any more at twelve."

"Young enough, to go away alone," uttered the mother with a sigh. "Does he really have to go on Monday? Tomorrow is Sunday."

"Nothing could be better," the husband said decisively. "If a thing has to be done, it is best to have it settled right away. I can't see anything dreadful in it. He is not going to Australia, and next winter he'll be home again."

"It is a blessing that we can give him into the protection of our Father in Heaven. I find this my only consolation now when the boy goes away, and I don't even know the people he is going to," said Mrs. Lesa.

"That is quite true," the husband replied, happy at the thought that his wife had found a consolation. "I think everything is all right now," he said after a pause, pushing his pipe from one corner of his mouth to the other. But something still seemed to be on his mind. "I think the boy ought to be told about going."

" He knows, for I told him this morning; only I didn't know when."

The man found this information very welcome. Vinzi had known all day what was to happen to him and he had retained his composure. As Lesa had anticipated a flood of tears, he was very glad to be spared a scene.

Next day the afternoon sun was shining down upon the bench before Lesa's house when he took his seat there as usual and called to Vinzi to come to him.

" You know that you are to go to our cousin's on the mountain," he began when the boy was sitting beside him. " It is beautiful there and you'll soon like it. You are going there for your own good and I hope you'll remember to do honor to your parents. Your fellow-traveller knows the house you are to go to. You are expected there, though they do not know the exact day of your coming. All you have to tell them is who you are. Just say that I sent you as I planned to do. You leave early tomorrow morning with a man who knows the way and has exact instructions."

The father was decidedly pleased when Vinzi said not a word. To give the boy courage he

vividly described the gay life of his young cousins in the midst of their lively mountain cattle. The mother in the meantime packed the little bag Vinzi was to take on his back.

Stefeli had heard from her mother what was to happen the next morning and as she noted that her questions proved unwelcome she said nothing. There was still less chance of having questions answered by her father who was now talking to Vinzi. Poor Stefeli felt quite lost and followed her mother about, hoping that the time would come soon when she could talk again.

The bag was packed and a very silent supper had been eaten. The mother seemed completely unable to utter a syllable. She was very anxious to control her grief in order not to make it harder for the boy, but she must say a few words to him that night when he was in bed. All was dark when she went to his little room and sat down at his bed-side.

"I am glad you came, mother," he said immediately. "I am a little frightened. Do you think my uncle will be cross when I forget to mind the cows? Stefeli always called to me when she needed me if I was not paying attention."

"I don't know, as I never saw either your aunt

or your uncle," replied the mother. " But I want to beg of you, Vinzi, to do your very best to please them. If they should complain of you, or feel obliged to send you home, your father could not bear it. Never do anything that would prevent you from looking cheerfully up to your good Father in Heaven, for you can always look to him when you feel afraid or lonely. You can tell Him everything, for He is always above you and can see and hear you. Don't forget that, Vinzi, and may this thought be your greatest comfort."

Vinzi promised never to forget her words. With this she left him.

In the very early morning the father accompanied Vinzi down to the station where his fellow-traveller was waiting. After the train had carried them across the valley to Brieg, they were to take to the road which led to the mountain.

CHAPTER IV

A DEPARTURE AND AN ARRIVAL

MR. THORNAU, who was staying with his sick wife at the baths of Leuk had just received two letters. One was from his daughter, and one from the children's governess. Both letters expressed an urgent desire to see him as soon as possible as the writers wished to speak to him. He felt no particular joy at the complete harmony of their wishes, because he knew that this usually resulted from a great difference of opinion. Laying the letters on his wife's bed, he said, "They've asked me to come to them again, and it is sure to be some matter I have to settle with Miss Landrat. Don't be alarmed, though, for worrying might hurt you."

Mr. Thornau could see that his wife was agitated as she murmered to herself, "I wish we had not sent the children away, it is not good for them. They should be here with us."

"If you want them here, Alida," said he, "you only need to say so, and I'll fetch them.

But you know that I installed them there to give you the quiet you ought to have."

"I'll be more quiet if you bring them," replied she. "Apparently they are not very happy. The governess may mean well, but she is too strict; which shows that she does not understand children. She uses the greatest severity when it is not necessary. I see that Hugo grows more quiet and reserved and Alida more obstinate and head-strong, despite her best intentions. Neither of them is easy to handle, as you know."

"Quite right," the husband agreed. "Alida has my temperament and being a girl, needs specially good guidance. Nature has curiously changed things, for Hugo needs special care, too. He has inherited your temperament and delicate health."

"Yes, he too needs special consideration," the mother added. "Please promise me always to treat him affectionately. He will stand in such need of it, especially when I am no more."

"But for heaven's sake, Alida, do not think of such a thing, and let us never say another word about it!" Mr. Thornau cried out. "I'll start right off to settle this new law-suit. I shall walk there, because the road is charming. It will

take two hours, but I'll probably take a carriage back.

Mr. Thornau was quietly chuckling to himself as he strolled down the mountain. He clearly recollected the last case he had had to arbitrate. Alida, while practicing, had rather urgently banged the innocent keys to make them feel how little to her taste it was to have to spend her time with them. Miss Landrat had given her a well-earned scolding, but had unfortunately grown violently angry. Suddenly Alida had pressed both hands on her mouth to keep herself from bursting out laughing. "Why are you laughing?" Miss Landrat had asked, still more angry. Alida shortly declared she could not tell why. On being asked three times more, she repeated the same answer. Finally the governess absolutely commanded her to tell the truth and she was reminded of her duty to obey. Alida knew that she must do so and therefore she informed the questioner that her face had grown so pointed while she was scolding her that she had resembled a drawing in her natural history book. She had suddenly thought her governess's name might really be Miss Landrat.* This impertinence

* Miss Country-rat.

was reported to her father, but Alida vigorously objected that she had not meant to be impertinent in the least. As her father had ordered her to obey, she could not do otherwise. The father had really found it a rather hard case to settle.

Mr. Thornau reached Mrs. Troll's house. The door was violently thrown open and Alida, who had spied her father, came rushing out. At the first moment of their greeting a whole stream of information about the event in question came pouring from her lips. But the father checked her. "Miss Landrat will be heard first; your turn comes next," he said. He kept his word and first got one version, which was followed by a vivid second from his daughter. Alida fully described Mrs. Troll's horrid behavior to Vinzi when she had sent him off. Hugo figured as witness and assured his father that Vinzi was a charming looking boy and not a common street boy by any means. He boldly stated that he would much rather associate with Vinzi than with Mrs. Troll.

The father never doubted that his daughter's sudden enthusiasm for music had an extraordinary cause. But this was not the most important point. He felt that the boy who had so honestly

returned his daughter's property, and had been invited by her to return to the house, had been treated most insultingly. He felt anxious to offer some kind of reparation and decided to pay a little call on the boy and his parents and to apologize for what had happened. They might give the boy a small present as a reward for returning the shawl. Full of joy Alida offered to act as guide, as Vinzi had told her where he lived and how to get there. They had no trouble finding Lesa's house as a slightly curving path which led across the big meadow took them there in the shortest time. Everything round about was quiet, with the exception of peaceful cackling sounds from the farm-yard. The house looked most tidy. The lawn was newly mowed, the road was swept, and the bench in the shade of the walnut tree seemed to have been polished.

"I like the looks of this place," said Mr. Thornau, glancing about with satisfaction. "Too bad, too, bad," he added. The last words he had murmered to himself, but Alida had heard and interpreted them.

"Don't you mean it is too bad we don't live here, papa?" she cried. "But we could easily move here, as our piano is only rented. Vinzi

could practice with me every day. Then I'd really enjoy it. You know, papa, it is dreadfully stupid to learn alone. That's why I gave him lessons; it made him practice, too. He is so clever that he'll soon learn."

The father burst into a laugh. "I see the reason for the music lessons now! Excellent! Did you say your pupil was anxious to learn?"

"Oh, yes, and he was so clever, too," exclaimed Alida. "Just think, papa, when I explained anything to him he usually understood it better than I did and afterwards was able to explain it all to me."

The father could not help smiling as he approached the door, which was unfastened.

Mr. Thornau, entering the hall, knocked on the first door. In answer to a call from within he went into a large bright room. Mrs. Lesa was sitting near the window with some sewing and Stefeli in front of her. The little girl's small fingers were with difficulty holding several thick knitting-needles; the coarse thread was wound six times around her index-finger. The woman rose at once and met her visitors. Mr. Thornau, introducing himself, gave her to understand that he had come to express his sincere regret for what

Mrs. Troll had said to Vinzi. He knew that the boy had brought back Alida's property and had been invited by Alida to come again. He also hoped that he and his children would be able to tell Vinzi themselves how sorry they were about Mrs. Troll's unkind words. He wondered if he would accept some friendly attention from them in gratitude for finding the shawl. Mrs. Lesa did not know what Mrs. Troll's words had been, for Vinzi had not repeated them. She realized what must have happened, however, and it came into her mind that Mrs. Troll's remarks to her husband had occasioned Vinzi's immediate removal from home. He had left only that morning and all the mother's thoughts had been engrossed by his going. Begging the gentleman to take a seat she told him where Vinzi had been sent.

Alida, rushing up to Stefeli, asked her impetuously, "Where is your brother?"

"He has gone away," was Stefeli's reply.

"Why are you not on the pasture? I thought you always stayed on the pasture till he comes back," said Alida, evidently well informed on the matter. "If you were there you would not have to knit such a heavy stocking."

" Vinzi has not gone for but an hour; he has gone for weeks and weeks. That's why somebody else will have to take care of the cows now, but we don't know who is to attend to them yet," Stefeli replied. " You see I couldn't possibly do it all alone. I couldn't manage them if they were all jumping around at once. But mother told me that all bad things have a good side, too. She thought I couldn't spend my time better than knitting woolen stockings for Vinzi to wear when he comes home again."

" I should say that that decidedly belonged to the very worst side of all," replied Alida quickly. " Those thick needles are hurting you and the heavy thread is cutting into your finger. Won't you show me your barn-yard? I can hear the funny little noises the chickens are making. Can't you come out with me? "

Stefeli looked towards her mother, who had heard what the children were saying. With a nod Stefeli was given permission, and the girls ran out.

" I am sure the boy wants to go, too," said Mrs. Lesa, glancing towards Hugo, who had posted himself shyly behind his father's chair. " The air would do him good."

"Yes, Hugo, you can go and see the place," remarked the father. "Look how those two are running, or rather flying about. Go and run about with them."

Hugo obeyed.

"If I have understood you rightly, Mrs. Lesa," Mr. Thornau continued the interrupted conversation, "the boy has been sent away because he shows no interest in your fine, prosperous farm and has evidently no inclination for his future life's work. But I cannot believe him to be a dull boy, for he seems to have been tremendously eager to take music lessons from my daughter. According to her he showed the most extraordinary comprehension."

"Oh, no, he is not dull," replied Mrs. Lesa with animation, "the trouble with him is that he has his thoughts where they ought not to be. If he happens to be out in the field with his father and he hears the sound of a bell anywhere he drops everything and pays attention to absolutely nothing else till no sound of it can be heard any more. Very often when no one else can hear anything he seems to be listening to something. Naturally his father gets impatient with him. He thought that if Vinzi lived for a while

with boys who love farm life he might change and get to like it, too. But I don't know how it will work out," added Mrs. Lesa with a wistful shake of the head. "These things are so deeply rooted in Vinzi. When he was a baby he would stand stockstill at hearing a beautiful sound. Whenever he got hurt and was crying, I only had to take him on my lap and sing him a song to make him happy and quiet again."

"But, my dear Mrs. Lesa, all this clearly shows that your boy has an ear for music and a real devotion to it, together with natural talent," Mr. Thornau said eagerly. "Did you never think of having his talent developed? The boy and you, too, might reap the greatest happiness that way."

"I do not know what the gentleman means," answered Mrs. Lesa with a questioning look.

"What I mean? Your boy might be sent to a music school where they could judge his talent. He could study there. It takes years, of course, but what of that? If he turns out to be a finished musician he would be happy and satisfied, and you, too, of course."

"That's nothing for Vinzi," said Mrs. Lesa deliberately. "His father would not consent.

He would never let his only son leave home for years and years. He would not let him live among strangers for such a reason, and it would be altogether too uncertain a future for the boy."

"Isn't the world strange?" exclaimed Mr. Thornau. "Just look at my boy! He is my only son, too. He only needs to say what he wants and I give it to him. He may study what he pleases, and it makes me happy to let him. But what do you think? If I ask him, 'Would you like riding horseback?' he answers, 'No, I'd rather not.' Should I ask him if he wants to learn to play the violin, or the piano, or the flute, all he says is, 'No, I'd rather not.' 'Would you like to become a sailor and go far across the sea into foreign countries?' He always says, 'Oh, no, father, I'd rather not,' and that is the answer I get every time. I cannot help being envious of your son who has such a decided inclination for music."

Mrs. Lesa had watched Hugo for quite a while through the open window. Leaning against a tree, he was staring indifferently before him. The two girls in the meanwhile were playing tag, shrieking violently whenever they were caught, and then eagerly beginning again.

"He probably is not very strong," she said sympathetically. "He looks pale and thin. He would get stronger if he could live a while on the pasture."

"Yes, I suppose that would do him good," replied Mr. Thornau. "He never was very hardy and now he seems more frail than ever. Since my wife was taken ill and the boy had to be separated from her, all the life seems to have gone out of him."

"Why don't you let him stay with his mother?" Mrs. Lesa inquired. Her voice clearly showed an interest, as if it were a matter of great importance to herself and as if her visitor were an old friend of hers.

Mr. Thornau smiled.

"You are a real mother, Mrs. Lesa, even for children that are not your own. I like that. But you see, my wife has been ordered a complete rest. So I had to send the children away. If the boy is allowed to be with his mother, the girl wants to be with her, too, and she is by nature very noisy—of course she can't help it. But the mother wants her children back for she worries about them more when they are absent. But I think my visit has been long enough, Mrs. Lesa," said Mr.

Thornau, getting up. "Please permit me to come again, for I like your home extremely."

Mrs. Lesa accompanied her guest outside and called the children. Hugo was still leaning against the tree, but when the girls came running forward he slowly followed. When Stefeli heard that her mother had invited Mr. Thornau to come again, she said quickly, "You must be sure to come, too, Alida. I might be up on the pasture then, and you could see what it is like there."

Alida promised to return, and after taking leave, Mr. Thornau and the children wandered back to Mrs. Troll's house. As she appeared in the doorway just then, Mr. Thornau immediately informed her that the children were leaving her in a few days. Their mother wanted them back sooner than he had expected to take them home, but he promised her to fulfill his obligations. The chief reason for their going, though, was that he wished no one to suffer for an act of courtesy shown his children.

How changed Mr. Thornau was of a sudden, Mrs. Troll thought to herself. He had turned from her so abruptly, he who had always been so courteous and friendly. He really meant to take the children away. Of course he would never

bring them back. And all on account of that miserable boy across the way. It was really laughable. However, Mrs. Troll was not in a mood to laugh at all. Now when it was too late she would willingly have taken back the harsh words she had said to Vinzi.

Just then the carriage Mr. Thornau had ordered drove up. Alida, close at her father's side, extracted a triple promise from him that he would soon take them away. When the carriage started she had to let him go. Lost in deep thought, Mr. Thornau drove down the mountain-side. His impression of Mrs. Lesa and her household had been extremely pleasant, and he wished he had known the woman before he had placed his children elsewhere. She might have been justified in feeling deep resentment against them, as the boy had really been banished on their account, but not a trace of such feeling had she shown. He also decided to let his daughter discontinue her music study. He was sure that if she had real love for music it would show itself in some other way. Suddenly Mr. Thornau was greeted by a wanderer going in the same direction and in whom he recognized his table-companion from the hotel.

"Oh, Mr. Delrick, what a hermit you are!" he called out, ordering his carriage to stop. "If you refuse to get into my carriage I shall think that my company is not good enough for you."

Mr. Delrick politely thanked him for the offer, but said that he was unwilling to give up his daily walk even for such good company.

"Good! then I'll join you," said Mr. Thornau, jumping out of the carriage. "I am sure what I have to say will interest you."

Mr. Delrick smiled, and the two men walked along side by side.

"Do not smile in such an incredulous way," continued Mr. Thornau. "Do you really intend to turn your back on society and live alone?"

"It is not quite so bad as that," Mr. Delrick answered with a smile, "but I don't mind admitting that I should leave the hotel if I could find a pleasant home with simple upright people to stay in. I should enjoy nature much more there."

"I have found the very house for you," said Mr. Thornau triumphantly. "That's what I was going to tell you."

He then related his experiences of the day and described his new acquaintance, Mrs. Lesa,

with great enthusiasm. The deep peace of the surroundings and the unusual order and cleanliness in the house and garden, barn and stable would make anybody long to live there. "Enough, Mr. Delrick," he concluded. "It certainly is the home for you. I really feel very unselfish telling you this, because we shall be the losers if you leave us. But strangely enough, one cannot help doing you a favor. You win people's heart's in spite of themselves.

"My dear Mr. Thornau," said his companion, patting him on the shoulder, "you are kind indeed to take pity on a poor unpractical hermit. I feel ever so grateful to you. Your description has awakened a keen desire in me to take a look at the house."

At this point a beautiful path joined the road. Though much longer it repaid by the very fine views to be had from several spots. As Mr. Delrick wanted to walk home that way, the friends separated and Mr. Thornau again climbed into his carriage.

When Vinzenz Lesa came out of the house next day to look after his business on the farm, he noticed a stranger, who was apparently seek-

ing someone. As soon as the latter saw the farmer, he approached.

"Does this house by any chance belong to a Mr. Lesa?" he asked politely.

"Yes, sir," was the answer.

"Do I have the honor of speaking to the owner of it?" asked the stranger.

"Yes, sir."

"I am lucky to find you, Mr. Lesa. I'd like to do some business with you. My name is Delrick, and I came from Dresden. I am stopping in the baths of Leuk, where there are too many people for my taste. As I want to stay in the neighborhood, I am looking for a quiet home to live in for a few weeks. When Mr. Thornau told me about yours I came to see it myself. I cannot help wishing that you would take me as a boarder."

"I live here with my wife and child and I take in no strangers," Mr. Lesa replied curtly.

"You are right," Mr. Delrick answered pleasantly. "If I were in your place I'd do the same."

Lesa could not help looking at the stranger in astonishment. "I suppose then that our business is settled?"

"I am afraid so," replied Mr. Delrick, "but I wish you could tell me another house where I could live. One as much like yours as possible, just as well situated and surrounded by such mighty trees. You have a picked estate, Mr. Lesa, and I realize that I can't expect to find such order and care anywhere else."

Mr. Lesa was visibly pleased that the gentleman had eyes enough to see that his home was kept differently from many others. But his wife really merited most of the praise for the condition of the yard and garden. He could not help thinking of her, sitting in the house and worrying about her boy. By now Vinzi had probably reached his cousins on the mountain. She had hardly spoken a word all day, and he was sorry for her. It might be a good plan to take this gentleman into the house to fill her loss. She had thought before of getting a room ready for boarders and as the stranger had made a most agreeable impression on him he felt not at all averse to the idea of spending his free evenings with such a man.

After reflecting he answered, "I can't really think of any other place. But you might go in and speak to my wife—if she should agree to take

you I won't have any objections. May I attend to my work now?"

With this he offered his hand in farewell.

At this unexpected turn Mr. Delrick was most happy and surprised. Holding Lesa's hand in his a moment he asked, "Do I understand you right, Mr. Lesa? Will you really be satisfied with whatever your wife decides to do?"

"Yes, I'll be satisfied," Lesa answered before turning about.

When Mr. Delrick's knocking had been answered by a response to come in, he entered the room. The child was there alone, knitting a heavy stocking at the window. Going up to Stefeli, he asked the little one to call her mother as he wanted to speak to her.

"Oh, she'll soon be here. When she heard you knocking she went to her room because she was crying a little," said Stefeli.

"Oh, I am sorry. Has something sad happened that your mother has to cry?" asked the stranger.

"Yes, because Vinzi has gone away for all summer and she doesn't even know the people he is living with," Stefeli went on.

"Is Vinzi your brother?" the gentleman

asked, full of sympathy. "Why did he have to go away?"

"We don't quite know," Stefeli replied, "perhaps because Alida gave him music lessons."

"Oh, what a strange case!" Mr. Delrick remarked with a smile. "I suppose you have always been with your brother. You must miss him now that you are all alone?"

"Yes, of course, and mother does, too, and he is missed also on the pasture. We were on the pasture all day long. Father has a cow-boy now and my mother won't let me go to the pasture any more. Father said the cows won't graze and are running about as if lost. Schwärzeli wants to jump all the hedges, and when the new boy chases her she turns about wildly and runs away frightened. I believe it, too. We have known each other so long and well, and she doesn't like a new boy who tries to rule her. She doesn't know his voice and she doesn't feel at home at all, poor Schwärzeli!"

When Stefeli had gotten as far as that in her recital the door opened and her mother entered. Mr. Delrick, going to meet her, said that he had come with her husband's permission to ask her a question, but as he had heard of her recent

sorrow from her little daughter, he did not feel it right to trouble her.

"It is often good for us if we have to pull ourselves together. Then we have less time to brood over our troubles," Mrs. Lesa replied collectedly.

"It might be still better to look on our grief as if it were no grief at all. That makes it yet easier to bear. What do you think, Mrs. Lesa?" said Mr. Delrick as confidentially as an old friend.

Mrs. Lesa looked up in surprise.

"I think I understand what the gentleman means, but I hardly seem to find an answer," she replied after a pause.

"There is no hurry," said Mr. Delrick kindly. "If you will permit me to live in your home for a few months we might find many an hour to continue our conversation."

More astonished than ever, Mrs. Lesa glanced at the stranger. A happy smile spread for a moment over her features, only to disappear as suddenly. "It does not depend on me alone, sir," she said calmly. "I know that my husband won't have strangers in the house. That settles the matter, I fear."

"Mr. Lesa and I understand each other already," said Mr. Delrick. "He told me himself that he would be satisfied with whatever you decide to do."

Mrs. Lesa knew not what to think. Only a short time ago her husband had positively declared that he wanted no strangers to live with him. However, the gentleman might look at the two rooms possible, in order to know if they would suit him. She would then consult with her husband and send him word at the hotel. Having no intention to hurry Mrs. Lesa in her decision, Mr. Delrick agreed. Climbing the stairs, he glanced into the rooms. One had an eastern exposure and in the other the noonday sun was shining through the windows. The branches of the old walnut trees outside were swaying in the breeze, and Mr. Delrick was immensely taken with them. If he had had his way he would have taken possession of the rooms at once. This Mrs. Lesa could not fail to observe.

"I must say good-bye to your little daughter," he said going towards the door. "We are good friends already and I hope we can continue to be so."

Stefeli, who had been hiding behind her

mother, shot forward at these words. She had taken in everything and had followed her mother in order to find out if the gentleman liked the rooms. She was hoping that he would come to live there. That would give her somebody to talk to, for he had listened very attentively to everything she had told him about the pasture.

Mr. Delrick, shaking her hand, begged her to lead him up to the pasture some day. At parting Mrs. Lesa promised to send their decision to him as soon as possible, for he was anxious to know.

When Vinzenz Lesa returned home in the evening, the first question he asked his wife was, "Well, what did you settle with the gentleman?"

She told him about their conversation and her having put off a decided answer until she knew what he thought about it.

"But I am quite sure, Vinzenz," she concluded, "if this gentleman comes to live with us he is sure to bring a blessing to our home."

"I suppose we need not scorn it," replied the farmer. "You had better send him word that we expect him soon."

His wife did so with joy in her heart and a few days later Mr. Delrick moved into Mr. Lesa's house.

CHAPTER V

BANISHMENT

DURING the first half of the journey Vinzi had not spoken. The thought that he was to spend a long time in the midst of strangers far from his home lay heavily upon him. He hardly realized what went on about him. In Berisal his companion took him to the inn belonging to his father's friend. When the latter had questioned the boy sufficiently about the trip, he found it wise for Vinzi to have supper and immediately go to bed, as he was sure to be tired from the long waken till his fellow-traveller firmly shook him the next morning. As the sun was already high, it was necessary to hurry; but that did not trouble Vinzi, for he was used to that at home. On the days when they had gone to the pasture Stefeli was nearly always dressed when he got up, and he had had to be quick to get ready in time. Oh, if only Stefeli were there now to call him, and if only his mother would come in to say a few friendly words! Vinzi had to fight hard to keep

back the tears. He was dressed in a short time and sat down to his cup of coffee in the room where his companion awaited him. The two companions went silently up the mountain. Poor Vinzi felt stranger and stranger as he neared his destination.

"Look, boy," said the young workman, who had been whistling all the time, "do you see that stone house?"

Vinzi saw it and in his terror he could not utter a syllable. He thought that the gloomy gray house on the stony slope was his cousin's place.

"Yes, I see it," he finally said in a very low voice.

"We'll stop there to get something to eat," said the young man. "After that comes the last stretch we have to climb. From then on it goes down hill and you'll soon be there. I have to go all the way down to the next valley, so we won't have much time to rest."

Vinzi was perfectly indifferent. He felt little enough inclination to eat and was constantly picturing to himself his arrival at the house of his unknown cousins. Maybe it looked as gloomy as the gray house of stone. His inner agitation constantly increased while they had a short lunch

and afterwards when they silently took to the road again. They stood on the summit now and the path began to slope down hill.

"What is that?" asked Vinzi glancing timidly at a large building which lay at the left of the road. Despite the fact that it seemed to shelter many people, everything about it lay in soundless peace and not a human being could be seen.

"That's nothing bad, you don't need to be frightened," said the young fellow. "On the contrary, it is a nice place. Good monks live there, who take in people that travel by in winter, half frozen. They have a warm fire for you and a drop of something warm to strengthen you."

"What is that over there?" asked Vinzi again after a little while, when an old solitary tower showed itself to the right of the road.

"Do you think you have to live there? Don't make such eyes!" said the young man. "I shouldn't like to live there myself. It is as quiet here as if it were at the end of the world. But they do grow old here. Ten years ago I saw a man sitting there with his hair and beard as white as the snow on that peak. A year ago I

saw him, too, and sure enough, there he is again. Quick now, boy, you don't have far to go."

But the end was not reached before half an hour's vigorous tramp was behind them. Pointing down hill the workman said, "Look at that white building down there! That's a little chapel. A few houses are about it and they call the hamlet 'Bychapel.' The village is a bit further down, but your uncle lives near the chapel. I'll show you the house and then I'll leave you. You can't possibly miss your way."

Vinzi stared breathlessly ahead of him, and without once looking back, rushed forward. They had reached the chapel, which was a little way from the road on a hillock. The young man stopped.

"Well, here we are!" he said. "Pass the chapel to your right and go to the very last house which has a barn beside it. Lorenz Lesa lives there. Good-bye now and good luck!"

"Good-bye, thank you!" said Vinzi, as he sadly shook hands.

The young man turned about and went whistling on his way and Vinzi looked after him. The last person who was connected with his home had vanished and nothing but the un-

known lay before him. But alas! it had to be. He did as he was told and found the house on the grassy slope.

A small, stone building behind it was evidently the stable. At the other side was a brown construction covered with stones and shingles, evidently the barn, where the supply of hay was kept. As the small door of the barn was wide open and everything about the house was still and the house door shut, Vinzi went towards it. He knew well enough that one couldn't get into the door from the ground except by clambering up the boards, for the hut was raised off the ground by four posts to keep the hay dry and airy. Vinzi climbed in through the extremely low door, where a grown up person was obliged to stoop. A tall, strongly-built man was straightening up the hay.

"Good evening!" Vinzi called out. "Does this barn belong to Lorenz Lesa?"

"It does, what do you want with him?" the man called back.

"He is our cousin. I belong to Vinzenz Lesa in Leuk and father sends you his good greetings. He said you knew about my coming here," Vinzi went on confidentially, for he hoped

that this man who had already won his trust might be his uncle.

Sticking his fork into the hay, the man came nearer in order to hear better.

He looked the boy straight in the eye, offered him his hand, and said pleasantly, "Oh, I see! Are you really Vinzi? I am glad you have come to your relatives. Did you come up here all alone?"

Vinzi's heart had opened at the glance of the friendly eyes and the kindly sound of his voice. He bravely raised his eyes from the floor at which he had been staring till now, and told about his travels. He was so glad, he said, to have found his uncle so soon, for he had been quite frightened at the thought of coming among strangers.

"There is nothing to be afraid of," said the uncle good-humoredly. "My boys are not exactly tame, but you can manage with them. You must be hungry and thirsty now," he went on, "and we had better go over to your aunt, who'll look after you."

Vinzi was on the ground with a jump and his uncle followed. Just at that moment a woman of rather generous proportions opened the door and calmly looked about her.

"I have to let the smoke out a bit," she remarked to her husband. Then observing the boy at her husband's side, she calmly looked him over.

"I am bringing you our nephew from Leuk," said the man, "but he is still a bit afraid of us. Please look out that he doesn't feel worse." At this last remark the man slightly chuckled.

"I frighten no children," answered the woman deliberately, giving Vinzi her hand. "Welcome to our house, nephew." Then she began to inspect him so thoroughly from top to toe that her husband finally said, "I should think it better if you examined the rest of him inside. Can't you see that the boy still has the pack on his back? I am sure he wouldn't take it amiss to have something to eat after the long tramp he has had."

"He can have something right away," said the woman. "Supper is nearly ready, but the smoke drove me from the stove. "I'll put the food on the table and we can begin to eat. We don't need to wait for the boys; they are sure to turn up sooner or later."

Turning towards the house, she freed Vinzi of his pack. Not very long afterwards he sat comfortably at the table with his aunt and uncle

and as soon as all fear of the strange relatives had left him he was suddenly conscious of the most tremendous appetite. Despite the long trip he had barely eaten. The cousin seemed somehow to have guessed this, for long before the boy's plate was empty he heaped it full again with steaming potatoes and lovely yellow cheese. This combination tasted so delicious together that Vinzi thought he had never eaten anything better in his life.

Once in a while his aunt would say, "Give him more milk. You mustn't forget how parched he must be from the wind and dust of his long trip."

Vinzi needed no urging to drink one cup of fresh milk after another. All of a sudden shrill voices and calls could be heard outside, followed by the loud flicking of whips and happy cries. Vinzi looked out of the window, amazed, but saw nothing.

"There are the boys! They have come home with the cows. I must quickly run out to help them, for they can't attend to the cattle alone. I suppose you've never done so either? Would you like to come out and see our cows and the stable?"

"Oh, leave him alone now!" said the aunt.

" Why should he rush about after all the walking he's done? He can start the day with the boys tomorrow, if he wants to."

" I only asked, because boys usually like to be where something lively is going on," replied Lorenz Lesa, " but he shall be free to say what he prefers."

" I'd like to stay here," replied Vinzi.

" All right, then," said the uncle, as he went outside.

The aunt showed herself pleased that Vinzi was willing to remain quiet and did not immediately want to run away. First of all he was to have another cup of milk to lay the last bit of dust from the journey. Then folding her arms and settling comfortably into her chair she said: " Now tell me about your people at home and the kind of life you lead there. I like to hear about such things."

Vinzi was pleased at this opportunity to talk about his home. He had been wondering all the time what his mother was doing just then, whether Stefeli was alone on the pasture, and how everything was getting along without him. He told his aunt about their household, especially how his mother and Stefeli usually spent the day.

A loud tramping neared the door now and the next instant it was flung open. A boy of Vinzi's age came running in, followed by a little chap and one much larger, who apparently resented being the last. Quickly giving a high jump, he tried to leap over the little one's head by propping himself on his shoulders. But quick as a wink the sly little one ducked down and the big boy fell headlong with a thump.

"You must not enter in such an unmannerly fashion, Faz," said the mother calmly.

"Good evening, cousin," said the eldest, holding his hand out to Vinzi.

"Good evening, cousin," cried the second boy, too, and "Good evening cousin," also called the youngest, pushing his way very near to Vinzi.

Vinzi heartily shook the proffered hands and answered their salutations. Meanwhile the father had come in.

"You must know each other's names, boys," he said, stepping towards the group. "Your cousin's is Vinzi, which is short for Vinzenz. My three are called Joseph, Bonifaz and Maurus. But these are their calendar names, and we call them Jos, Faz and Russli. I think you had

better sit down now, for the potatoes have cooled off enough to eat."

"Oh, I am glad," said the mother with satisfaction, "then they won't burn their throats today. Usually they do when they are in such a hurry."

All three settled down to the important business of eating. They said nothing, but their glances resting on Vinzi showed that he occupied their thoughts completely.

Now that the tumult had subsided and one could speak and hear without exertion, the mother said, "As our relatives did not let us know beforehand that Vinzi was coming, we did not get ready for him. But I have an idea. If he is to sleep in the house we shall have to clear out the store-room where wheat, corn and all kinds of things are kept. The mice up there squeak and scratch so much that they might frighten him. Wouldn't it be much better if we fixed him a bed in the hay-rick? He would really be much more comfortable there."

"He'll have to say himself where he'd rather sleep," put in the uncle. "If he prefers the store-room, we'll all of us go up and clear everything away. Vinzi, where would you rather sleep?"

"I'd love to sleep in the hay-rick," replied Vinzi.

"I thought so," said his aunt, quite relieved that the matter was so quickly settled. "And you must have a little table, a bench and a chest of drawers to make you comfortable," she added. "As soon as you are all done with supper you can take some things over for him."

She went out first in search of what was needed, and soon after the three boys had finished their meal and hastened after her. When Vinzi rose in order to make himself useful, too, the uncle assured him that the heavy pack he had carried on his back was enough work for that day. Hanging it on his arm, the man beckoned to Vinzi to follow him. They had scarcely reached the hay-rick, when the three boys came running along. Jos carried a little cupboard, Faz had a small table with a large blanket on top, and Russli brought a little bench. The mother with the pillow and sheets followed behind. With an agility clearly showing how used she was to climbing into the barn, the aunt had gone in. One thing after another was lifted up by Lorenz Lesa, and she pulled them in through the door.

When the last one was inside, the uncle said,

"We'll say good-night to you now. On the inside of the door is a wooden bolt that you can fasten. Once inside, you are the sole master of your castle and no person can come whom you wish to keep out."

Now the aunt came down again.

"Everything is ready for you," she said. "And look, nephew, over there is the stream, where you can wash yourself. No one will disturb you there. I laid a towel for you on the bench. Good-night."

The cousins all wished him good-night, too, but Jos turned round once more.

"Are you coming up to the pasture with us tomorrow morning, Vinzi? Do you expect to stay with us all day while we mind the cows?"

"Yes, certainly," replied Vinzi. "I'll help you all I can, but you must tell me which I have to mind most. Please call me in the morning, so that I shan't be late."

"Yes, yes, I'll call to you loudly through the round air-hole," Jos promised. "You'll be able to hear me well enough." With that he ran away.

Vinzi was left alone. Climbing up through the door, he inspected his barn. In a corner on a high, soft pile of hay his bed was spread. Beside it the hay had been pushed away to give room for

the table and the bench, and at the wall stood his little cupboard. It all looked like a cosy and inviting little room. But he was not able to sleep because the unusual happenings of the day had excited him so much. Sitting down on the board which formed his threshold, he looked outside. The stars were glowing above him in the heavens and just then the moon rose from behind the mountains. It was beginning to light up the dark trees and meadows and the little church looked very white, and the high snow-peak rising above the rocky ranges became more and more brilliant every minute. Vinzi opened his eyes very wide, for in his great terror of what lay before him he had seen practically nothing after the gloomy house on the mountain desert. He had made up his mind that only frightful things would happen to him. How different was the scene now before him from what he had anticipated!

There was no stony desert here. On the contrary, the moonlight gleamed peacefully down to the green slope and sparkled on the tops of the larch trees over the way. In the peaceful silence he could hear the continuous soft gurgling of the near-by stream. Vinzi listened to the sound

while the tones grew fuller and louder till lovely melodies could be distinguished. He must have been sitting there for a considerable time when a strong gust of wind suddenly pushed the door to against his knee and woke him from his dreaming. He had never in his life seen the stars above him sparkle as they did that night. His mother's words that the good God in Heaven was above him everywhere and could hear and watch him now suddenly occurred to him. Many times he had heard her say these words, but at that moment his heart fully realized them. It gave him a sense that Heaven was very near him and filled his soul with gratitude to God who had let him find happiness where he had anticipated evil. How groundless had been his fear of his uncle and aunt! They had received and treated him so kindly that he already felt at home. In his joy he would have loved to fill the night with a loud song of praise, but it was too late for that. Not a single light could be seen about him; everyone in all the cottages, far and near, was apparently fast asleep.

After shutting and bolting the door, he sought his fragrant bed, which was soft and splendid, for no hay could prick him through the heavy

sheets. Opposite his bed an especially bright star kept gleaming in through the round hole in the wall. He tried to shut his eyes, but it shone so brightly that he could not help gazing at it. Even when his lids seemed to be closing he opened them again to see it. Yes, the star was still shining. What was more, Vinzi could distinguish some faint, beautiful music, which finally put him to sleep. The star was singing to Vinzi so that he could hear it even in his dreams.

Next morning Vinzi was awakened by a dreadful noise, caused by his name being screamed by many voices at once. Stefeli had never called as loudly as that to waken him, thought Vinzi, still half asleep. But all of a sudden he realized where he was and whose loud voices had apparently been shouting for a long time in vain. Rapidly putting on the most necessary clothing, he opened his door wide and leaped down among his noisy cousins.

"Hurry up, come along!" they called all at once and Jos added, "Take your jacket along. As soon as we've had breakfast, we are off."

As Vinzi was not even washed yet, he begged them not to wait for him as he would rather follow them later.

The two older ones quickly ran off, but Russli going with Vinzi to the stream, said confidentially, " You don't need to wash yourself. You don't look dirty: come with us, Vinzi, you are clean enough."

" No, no, Russli," Vinzi answered. " One must wash every morning and besides it makes one feel better. Oh, what nice, clear water." So saying Vinzi kneeled down and taking up handfuls he poured the fresh water over his face again and again, and also drank one handful after another.

This made a deep impression on Russli, for Vinzi looked refreshed and radiant. Meditating deeply the little boy said, " I'll come and wash myself here with you and I'll drink afterwards like you, too. I'll do it every day from now on."

Having finished his toilet, Vinzi fetched his jacket and went over to the house with Russli.

Both uncle and aunt, who were still at breakfast, greeted Vinzi kindly. The aunt set a large cup of coffee before him and entreated the boy to help himself to lots of bread, as the strong mountain air would soon give him a fresh appetite.

" We ought to have let you sleep longer after your trip," said the uncle, " but the boys were just

wild for you to go with them. They are so pleased to have a cousin who belongs to them now."

"Just take your time," urged the aunt when she saw that Vinzi was hurrying in order to finish his breakfast. "Your uncle will go out with you when you are done, and he has not finished either."

When the uncle rose soon after, Vinzi followed him.

Jos and Faz had been flicking their whips for quite a while to show that they were ready. The father unfastened one cow after another from her stall and the whole procession began to move. Quite a stretch of road beyond the chapel had to be passed before the pasture-ground for the day could be reached. Russli had immediately come to Vinzi's side and was firmly grasping his hand. He tried to hold Vinzi back as much as possible, while Faz and Jos were busy driving the cows along. This was difficult, because the luscious grass along the sides constantly tempted them to stray from the road.

"Leave me alone, Russli," Vinzi said hurrying forward. "You see I must help your brothers to keep the cows in order."

During a struggle Faz had with a cow who

was trying to clean off a tender bush by the roadside he heard these words.

"Keep Russli out of mischief for us," he called back to Vinzi. "You can't possibly help us better than that. The little chap always tickles the cows with his rod and that makes them run from side to side. If they do that we can barely manage them. Russli is a mischievous little fellow, you'd better hold him tight."

Faz at last got control of his obstinate cow and, driving her along, followed the others.

"Vinzi," asked Russli, overjoyed at being able to have his new cousin's company, "have you a knife?"

"Yes, of course, everybody needs one," Vinzi replied.

"Come on and I'll show you a fine bush," said Russli, "where the branches are thick below and very thin above; you know they are very strong, too. Won't you cut me a few good willow sticks. Mine is broken and I can't do it myself because I am not allowed to have a knife."

"Why do you want the stick?" asked Vinzi. "I hope you don't want it for beating the cows. You heard what Faz just told me about you."

"Oh, I don't beat them, but I like to tickle

them a bit," explained Russli. "That makes them jump and they get lively."

"No, no, Russli, they don't think it fun," said Vinzi. "They jump from fright, because such thin whips hurt them very much. I won't make you any sticks for that. But show me the bush, and if the wood is good I'll cut you something else."

Of course Russli was terribly curious to know what Vinzi meant to make him. But Vinzi declared he would not tell till he had seen the bush and asked Jos a question. Expectantly Russli ran ahead. Soon they turned off from the road to a grove, where they found a large bush whose branches stood up perfectly straight.

"Here," said Russli, pulling Vinzi along.

Vinzi, gazing with satisfaction at the firm branches, began to cut those which pleased him most.

"Come now," he said after having gathered a considerable bunch, "we must go to your brothers. Do you know where they are? I can't see them any more. I'll cut it for you when I get there."

Russli hastened on followed by Vinzi.

"Oh, how lovely it is here," Vinzi exclaimed and stood still. "But where is the pasture?"

"Here," said Russli.

Vinzi looked about him. Here and there isolated high, dark larches let in the deep-blue sky through their delicate branches. On the lovely green slope little patches of fiery red alpine-roses glowed between moss-covered stones. The full mountain stream was rushing down hill throwing up snow-white foam whenever rocks tried to bar its course. Vinzi could see the cows quietly grazing a short distance away. He stood without moving. Never in his life had he seen such a pasture. The slanting sun fell through the trees on the glowing flowers and sparkled on the waving grass. The soft mountain air, gently fanning the trees, played with the shadows and soughed through their branches with a delicate song.

The soughing seemed first to grow, then to die away in the far distance. Vinzi had not moved from the spot, gazing and listening intently.

"When will you cut me what you promised?" asked Russli quite angrily, for his patience had given out with waiting.

"All right, I'll come," said Vinzi, as if awakening from a dream. "I'll come. But it

is wonderful here! Hold these sticks a minute, Russli. I'll come right back and make you what I said I would."

Vinzi ran over to the grazing place and looked about for his cousins. Across the road was a very large pasture without trees and with many cattle. Vinzi could see a small group of goatherds bending over a smoking spot on the ground. They were apparently trying to make a fire, but as it would not burn, were shouting all at once and causing much confusion. Vinzi saw Jos and Faz among them. First he called to Jos a considerable time in vain, but when Jos finally heard him, he came over.

"Come to us, Vinzi!" he called out, running. "We are making a fire, or I should rather call it smoke. One of the boys found a hole, and we think some kind of animal, maybe a marmot, is inside. It'll come out if the smoke gets into the hole. Then we can catch it. Come, we'll have such fun."

"No, I'd rather not," said Vinzi, for he had not the slightest desire to see a little frightened beast jump out of the hole, and much less to see all the boys chase it and frighten it more. "I promised Russli to come back. But I must ask

you something. Do you think your father would mind if I cut Russli a pipe? "

"Why should he mind? What do you mean? I couldn't even guess why not?" Jos exclaimed. "I am sure he couldn't possibly object, and we are only too glad if you keep Russli busy. He makes the cows simply wild and that keeps us chasing them. The minute they see him even they begin to run."

"Shouldn't I help you mind the cows?" asked Vinzi, slightly concerned. "Can I really sit down quietly and cut out pipes?"

"You can't help us any better way than that," said Jos. "Please believe me. Look how peacefully they are grazing. If Russli were teasing them, they would long ago have begun to run around."

Vinzi was delighted at being told his share of the day's work and he went back to Russli.

"Now, Russli," said Vinzi on reaching the little boy, "watch what I shall make."

As he settled down on a moss covered rock, the reddish-purple violets beside him exhaled such a sweet perfume that he had to draw in a few deep breaths. Then carefully choosing one of the branches he cut it off where it began to

grow more slender and started carving the thicker piece.

"What will it be when it's finished?" asked Russli, who had settled on the stone by Vinzi's side and was eagerly following the work.

"It'll be a pipe to play music on," was the answer.

Russli moved nearer to the carver in delighted surprise, for he was afraid he would lose something of the creation of this wonderful thing. Russli knew the little hollow pipes that usually broke right away, but he had never seen such a thick, long wooden pipe as his cousin was making. Vinzi had learned and invented many things since he had cut his first pipes that could only give forth one tone. He cut several holes now in order to have several tones played on it. But it took considerable time to bore the small round holes, because Vinzi was very particular. Several hours passed. Once in a while Vinzi stopped to listen to the wind singing in the branches, and to the merry wavelets of the mountain stream that gave forth sometimes a song of joy and sometimes a low plaintive note. Sometimes he stooped down to inhale the delicious perfume of the

violets beside him. But at last he snapped shut his knife.

"There, Russli! Take your pipe, it is finished!"

With glistening eyes the little boy set his pipe to his lips and produced the most penetrating sound. Russli was quite scared at the loud noise he had made, for he had blown into the pipe with all his might.

"You had better blow it," he said, giving the instrument to Vinzi.

At that instant they heard a shrill whistle followed by a second. It was clearly a summons.

"It is time to eat," said Russli. "They always whistle that way when we are to gather together for lunch. Come on."

Russli was already bounding away.

"Look at my pipe! Look, I have a pipe!" he called loudly to his brothers, who were already eating. As soon as Russli saw this, he looked about till he found the lunch-bag, which lay like a lost object on the ground. Quickly pulling out his share he gave Vinzi the food meant for him. "Take it!" he said, "this is yours. The others have already taken theirs."

Vinzi did this and settled himself beside

Russli. But he could not help thinking what Stefeli would say to them if she saw how they only looked after themselves, as if they had had a fight.

Jos had finished in the meantime and called from his seat to Russli, "Give me the pipe, I want to try it."

"Come and get it," said Russli in a curt way.

Vinzi had already risen to bring it to Jos, when the latter quickly jumped up, asserting that if he wanted it, it was for him to fetch it. Faz had joined them, too, now.

"Show it to me," he cried, but Jos, who was already holding it to his lips, pushed Faz away. Now the music began. All Jos knew was that the fingers had to be placed on the different holes to produce various sounds. He succeeded in that but they had a terribly harsh, disconnected tone.

"Give it to me, you don't know how," cried Faz, grabbing the pipe.

But under his fingers the pipe shrilled and yelled more hideously still.

"It looks so fine," said Jos regretfully, "and we could never have made so nice a one, but it does not sound nice."

Vinzi had finished his lunch by that time and took the pipe from Faz.

"I want to try it, too," he said. With this he began to play a little song, one tone clearly and beautifully following the other. Dumb with amazement the three stood before him and listened spellbound.

"You certainly know how to play, Vinzi; won't you teach me, too?" asked Jos eagerly as soon as Vinzi had paused.

"Me, too," cried Faz.

"And me, too," repeated Russli.

"Give me the pipe," begged Jos impatiently.

"No, give it to me," cried Faz, but Russli had already snatched it up and run away with his property for fear that he would be robbed of it by superior strength.

"Leave it to him," said Vinzi, "I'll make you each one out of the sticks I have. I can easily get all I want."

This quieted the brothers, and as they wanted more music they called Russli. Jos especially had been delighted with it. But no calling could bring Russli back. Finally, Vinzi had to hasten after him to explain that he was not to lose his precious gift. The boys sat about in a close

group now, for every one of them wanted to be as near to Vinzi as possible to see how it was done. He was made to play on and on, every conceivable tune he had ever known. When finally his memory gave out, he made up pieces out of songs of birds and the sounds of bells he had heard.

The group of listeners had constantly grown, for the boys from the other pastures waiting in vain for Faz and Jos, had gone to seek them. They got together every afternoon, usually to perpetrate some mischief, and Jos and Faz being mostly the leaders, they needed them. But the music pleased all the boys so much that they remained. The afternoon slipped away unnoticed.

One of the boys suddenly cried, "I hear the horn, it must be six o'clock."

Immediately they dispersed, but before going they called back to Vinzi, "Bring it with you tomorrow! Bring it tomorrow!"

It was high time for Faz and Jos to collect their cows to drive them home.

"Please, Vinzi, keep the little chap away from us going home. We'll get along much faster then. That's the best way for you to help us."

Vinzi was only too glad to take charge of

Russli. If his cousins found him most useful that way, he had a good conscience doing it, though it certainly was no hard work. Russli was also satisfied. Taking Vinzi's hand he strolled harmlessly by his side as if he had never played the slightest trick in his life. But he demanded to be entertained. Every time Vinzi stopped talking to listen to a bird's song or the gurgling of the stream, the little chap reminded him of his presence. When they approached the house they saw the father standing under the door to greet them.

"Well, how did you get along the first day, nephew?" he asked. "How did you like it on our pasture?"

"A pipe, look at my pipe! Here, father, take it!—it sounds fine," Russli interrupted loudly, holding the pipe as closely as he could to his father's eyes.

"Look, there they come with the cows," said the father. "Go in and show it to your mother. I'll soon come, too."

"I loved it on the pasture," Vinzi was now able to answer. "It is splendid there under the trees. The day passed so quickly!"

"Yes, and Vinzi helped us so much," added

Jos, who had joined them. "We got up there about ten times quicker than usual and all day the cows were quietly grazing, something they have not done for ages. I wish Vinzi would stay with us always."

"I am glad to hear that," said the father. "That's a good beginning and I hope you will keep on that way."

He went with the boys to the stable, and Vinzi followed, thinking that his uncle might need his help there.

"What can I do?" he called to his uncle through the open stable door.

The latter was busy milking. "We'll be done before very long," answered he, "but you can look about in the barn and stable, if you care to."

Vinzi went out. The sunset glow was gilding the rocky mountains opposite, the dark spruces had bright, golden tops, and now the bell of the little chapel began to fill the air with its lovely, peaceful music. Vinzi, carried completely away by all the beauty, stood and listened, rooted to the spot. He stood thus until the glow had faded and the chapel bell had stopped.

"Hello!" cried a voice behind him, while a

brisk blow fell on his back. Then he was pulled by force to the pump, where the very necessary daily ablutions had to be made before supper.

"Are you awake again?" asked Faz, who had pulled Vinzi along in the firm belief that he had fallen asleep in the middle of the road.

"Yes, and your fists would certainly have awakened him before he got to the water," said Jos, who had stepped up.

"Yes, indeed," replied Vinzi, "but I would rather he pulled me along than that he told your father that I fell asleep in the middle of the road. I wasn't asleep, you know."

"He isn't a tell-tale, but he certainly can give a good blow," Jos comforted Vinzi.

Faz proceeded to the house, followed by the others. The mother was waiting at the table, patiently enduring the dreadful sounds Russli made with his pipe.

"You pipe like a cat that is half strangled," Faz cried upon entering.

"You must not make fun of him right away," said the mother. "He does not play so badly for a little boy. He was just telling me something nice about you, Faz. He said that you did

not beat him all day, and that he never cried at all."

"He only gets hit if he deserves it," said Faz. "He behaved well today because Vinzi was amusing him. I hope Vinzi stays with us always. Everything went as smoothly as possible today."

The other three entered now and Russli immediately flew to his father with the cry, "Now the pipe!"

"No, no, Russli, first we eat and then comes the pipe," said the father sitting down. "You see when I was their age I also liked to cut pipes and blow on them. I'll have to look it over a bit, and then try if I still know how."

Russli was satisfied when he saw the deliciously smelling hot corn-cake his mother had put on the table. He immediately attacked his heaped-up plate.

After supper, when everybody leaned back happily in their chairs and the mother had cleared the table, the father said, "Now let me see the pipe; I want to hear what it sounds like."

Russli, being rather sleepy after his hearty meal, found it hard to rouse himself. But he heard his father's words and was dreadfully

afraid that Faz might bring his pipe to the father first, maybe even keep it afterwards. This brought him to his feet.

When he approached with it, the father exclaimed with surprise, examining the long pipe on all sides, "What a well-made pipe! This is no ordinary pipe at all, but a regular shepherd's pipe with all the regular holes. I wonder if I can still play."

Setting it to his lips, he brought forth sounds that somewhat resembled melody.

"Oh, father can do it better the first time, than we did after trying lots of times," said Jos astonished. "Only Vinzi can do it better still."

"We must hear him now," said the father, handing the pipe to the boy. "Won't you please play for us?"

Vinzi remembered one piece better than any and he had already played it for the boys at least ten times that day. It was the little tune Alida had taught him.

He started to play.

When he came to the end there was no sound for a moment, because the lovely melody had moved everyone deeply.

"Yes, of course he plays differently from

me," said the uncle. "I'd like to know who taught you."

"Isn't it fine to have something beautiful like that in one's own house, without having to seek it elsewhere?" said the aunt, quite overcome. "It's worth more than many great festivities. If our musician only could play us a beautiful hymn, we could all join in and sing."

"I'd love to," said Vinzi, "I know lots, because mother always sings one at home with us every evening. What shall I play?"

"You probably know the same ones I do. Can you play, 'I Sing to You with Heart and Mouth'?" asked the aunt.

Vinzi knew the hymn very well. After seeking a little for the notes he began to play firmly. The aunt sang heartily, the uncle raised a splendid bass and suddenly Jos joined in with a rich, fine voice. Faz growled low sometimes after his father, then he took up his mother's high notes. Russli squeaked all sorts of tones too, but the other voices were so strong that it did not disturb the singing. The aunt was so happy over the music that she clamored for another song as soon as the first was done. Then another, and still another.

The uncle said happily, "That was a fine entertainment, and we must do it again tomorrow. We can't do any better than praise God with music."

When Vinzi came to his hay-rick his heart was so full of thanksgiving that he was obliged to sit down a while on his high threshold. Looking up to the sky he saw thousands of stars looking happily down upon him. Oh, how wonderfully beautiful it was here. The father had said that it was a splendid thing to praise God with music. Tomorrow they would be allowed to do it again and probably every day after that, thought Vinzi to himself. The pipe had pleased the uncle, too, and he seemed to enjoy hearing it. The happiness in Vinzi's heart rose higher and higher at this thought. He felt as if he had to sing out loudly once more. In fact it seemed as if all he had to do was to join in the great song of praise which came to him from all sides, from the shining stars, the gleaming chapel, the merrily rushing stream, and the golden moon over the high mountains. He quietly sang to the glorious, magic music about him.

The wind stirred gently and wafted the perfume from the pungent hay to Vinzi's senses. Suddenly he remembered where he was. As it

had grown very cool, he quickly closed the door and sought his inviting bed.

From that day on Lorenz Leza's family had music every night. They sang eagerly as if it was the chief work of the day. But the work of the day was behind them, and they could give themselves freely to the joys of their happy evenings. What pleased Vinzi most was that his uncle and aunt always counted on having music every night. At supper time the aunt always said, "I look forward already to Vinzi's playing."

And when the meal was over the uncle would say, "I suppose we still have time for a song or two."

Whenever his uncle Lorenz started to sing, more songs he had known in his youth rose in his memory. Even if Vinzi did not know them, all the uncle had to do was to sing them to the boy a few times and the latter would repeat them perfectly. The rest could follow his piping and in that way learn all the songs. The uncle got a tremendous satisfaction from it all. When such a musical evening had passed the uncle shook Vinzi's hand three or four times. "You can make one young again with your music," he would say. "You are piping the joy of youth back into my heart, boy."

CHAPTER VI

HIGHER UP THE MOUNTAIN

ABOUT three weeks after Vinzi had come to his uncle's house a good friend of his father, who had business in Domo, came to see him. He brought him and the Lesa family greetings from Vinzi's parents. On his way home he expected to stop as he had promised to bring Vinzenz Lesa news of the boy. His parents wanted to hear how he took to the life on the mountain and how he got along with his relatives. They also wondered if he annoyed his relatives by his silent dreamy ways. The uncle and aunt were to decide when the boy was to come home. As soon as they were ready to let him go, they could entrust him to some companion or send word to Leuk where they could find one. The man was to return in five or six days, of which the fifth day had just passed by.

Lorenz entered the room. His wife had set the supper table and was quietly awaiting the return of the boys, when she could place their welcome meal before them.

"The man from Leuk won't come today," said Lorenz. "I suppose he'll be here tomorrow early. We must let them know down there how much we like Vinzi."

"Indeed we will," agreed the wife. "I was just wondering to myself why they sent him here. I would keep such a lad at home. One usually sends a boy away when he isn't quite as he ought to be, or if he has queer ideas in his head that he might lose among strangers. But there are very few boys like Vinzi. Since he has come here I hardly recognize our own. Take Russli, for instance. Every morning he had to be dragged by violence to the fountain, and while he got washed, he usually shrieked like mad. Now he runs over to the stream behind the hay-rick as soon as he is out of bed. He loves to wash himself there, he says, because Vinzi does it, too, and likes it. Russli rubs and scrubs himself cleaner than he would ever have let me do. He wants to look like Vinzi, whom every one likes to look at. Russli never comes home in tears the way he used to, either. One might have supposed that they had nearly killed him the way he carried on. When I ask him what has made the change in him, he answers that Faz is not allowed to beat

him, because Vinzi takes his part. If I ask Faz how it is that he leaves Russli in peace he answers that Vinzi keeps him in order and he needs no beating. 'I like it better that way,' he says sensibly. 'I wish Vinzi would stay with us always.' Faz would never have said such a thing before, for he used to enjoy giving blows. Jos was the only one who never gave us much trouble."

"Oh, I suppose the eldest sons are always considered models by their mothers."

"Oh, well, Jos can show himself anywhere," the woman continued. "I never saw a better-mannered boy than Vinzi, though. Jos has noticed that and has begun to imitate him, which suits him very well. He would only need a hat on his head and the kind of cloak around his shoulders that strangers on the stage-coach wear, to look like a gentleman's son."

"That's not necessary," interrupted the husband.

"And we never should have found out that Jos has such a beautiful voice if Vinzi had not started him with his music," continued the wife. "And just think of our peaceful evenings with the lovely singing every day. We are not dis-

turbed any more by one boy throwing the other under the table, while the third one is breaking his chair by riding on it. I think that the music has somehow tamed them. They are hardly the same boys! I just want to say one more thing. Why did your cousin Vinzenz send the boy up here instead of keeping him at home? I am sure his wife did not wish him to go—I guess that much. Tell me, what do you think?"

"You can be sure that Vinzenz had a good reason," replied the husband. "I have asked myself the same question and have not been able to answer it. I remember his mentioning something to me about the boy. When the man from Leuk asked us if Vinzi did not annoy us with his long fits of silence, I recollect that he thought our boys were more merry at their work. As he wished his boy to be the same he thought the totally different surroundings here might help him. He was in the right, too. Vinzi is as gay as a lark, nowadays, and makes the others gayer than they ever were."

The cheerful cries of the home-coming boys could now be heard. In order to assist them the father went outside while the mother turned towards the kitchen. The time had come to put

everything on the table in order to avoid impatience on their part and burnt throats.

The next day the man from Leuk returned. After putting a glass of wine before him Lorenz Lesa sat down at his side.

"What shall I tell them?" asked the man.

"Tell my cousin Vinzenz that everything here is going well," began Lorenz, "and that his boy is very happy. He sings and whistles like a bird in seed time, and we with him."

"And that we love him as if he were one of us," added the wife. "We want to keep him here till the very last day of autumn."

"Yes, and tell my cousin," the uncle continued, "that we should like to keep him for the winter if he has no objection. He has not annoyed a soul up here, on the contrary he has made every one happy."

"Vinzenz Lesa will be glad to hear that. I'll carefully give him your message," said the man. "Mrs. Lesa also wants to know how the boy is looking. She wants me to tell her exactly, but I suppose he is not to be seen."

"No, for the boys are all on the pasture from six in the morning till six at night. They sing and whistle and could not have a better time,"

said Lorenz. "My cousin will approve of that, I am sure, for he would certainly not like him to stay at home."

"And tell Mrs. Lesa that she need not worry," the woman went on. "Her boy looks as well and sprightly as a cricket. If he should be ill I'll see to him as if he were my own."

"Well, that's splendid," said the messenger from Leuk. He was satisfied with the news he could bring to Mrs. Lesa, for she had pressed him to inquire into the smallest details, many of which he had quite forgotten.

Vinzi had kept his promise in carving Faz and Jos each a beautiful pipe, and both were hard at work practicing. Pipe-playing had grown to be their sole amusement, for it was their dearest wish to imitate Vinzi as much as possible.

Both realized that Vinzi's playing was vastly superior to theirs, but they did not give up and tried to learn whatever they could. As soon as they reached the pasture in the morning, the piping began, and while the cows were grazing peacefully they would devote themselves to music. Jos and Faz were usually leaders of the other boys in their sports. When these did not appear they were very much missed by their

comrades. So the other boys came over to them, and soon this enthusiasm about music proved catching. Each boy wanted to try his talent for piping and thought he could imitate Vinzi's playing better than any other. But they all agreed in pronouncing him their master, for each pipe took on a different quality when Vinzi blew it.

After the pipes had continuously been whining, howling and squeaking the boys always begged Vinzi to play. They wanted to see how he did it, and Vinzi was only too glad to do so. He played as long as they liked to hear him, while they actually crowded around him and eagerly watched his fingers. The melodies seemed to come somehow of themselves. All he did was to let his fingers leap lightly over the holes, and it looked childishly simple. After watching him each thought that he could now do it, too, and it made every boy eager to try afresh. If one seemingly succeeded fairly well, another boy would say that he could do it as well if only he had his own pipe and took time to practice. This was impossible now, because one could not keep the precious instrument more than a few minutes at a time. There were already ten more who clamored for it.

Therefore one boy after another would come to Vinzi saying, "I wish you would cut me a nice pipe, Vinzi; I'll give you something for it."

Vinzi answered always most obligingly, "I'll make you a pipe and you needn't give me anything. But you'll have to wait for it, because I have promised to make others first."

Vinzi was kept very busy, because every day brought him new requests for pipes. Some of his time was taken up by playing, and Russli did not give up his demands upon him, either. But Vinzi felt happy and satisfied. Whatever he could do he did gladly, and it gave him great satisfaction to be able to spread such joy about him.

The uncle was delighted to hear about the daily gatherings on his pasture. He liked this pursuit of music and it pleased him that boys who lived as far up as the hospice should come down to learn the art of piping. By cutting several pipes every day Vinzi finally supplied nearly every pasture ground with two or three. But this did not suffice. As soon as a boy had succeeded in giving forth a few satisfactory sounds another immediately wanted to try his talent, too. It took considerable practice and patience

before they could attempt to play a tune, for it was even hard to make smooth, pleasant sounds.

The supreme wish of each boy had become to own a pipe which Vinzi had carved himself, for no one else could do it so well.

Among the boys who met daily there were about ten or twelve who were called the Tower Boys. Vinzi never knew exactly how many of them there were, because only some of them could come down to the Lesa pasture at a time, the others staying behind to mind the cows. Vinzi had first believed them all to be brothers. But he found out that they were cousins and came from three different households. He had given two of them pipes already, for they had been very eager for them. One of them who was called Black Vereli, on account of his black, curly hair and dark complexion, had teased and begged him for a pipe so insistently that Vinzi could not resist his pleading. He gave him one which was already finished despite the fact that the other boys cried jealously, "The Tower Boys have two already."

Full of gratitude and enthusiasm, Vereli ran away with his precious gift.

The next day he appeared again and quickly

ran to Vinzi. "I have to mind the cows today, but the others can stay," he said breathlessly. "But I have a message for you. I showed grandfather the pipe and he made me play on it. When he said I didn't know how to play, I told him that you could do it better than anybody else. So he wants you to come and play for him sometimes. Won't you come some day when I have to stay up there? Please come tomorrow, if you can," Vereli called back as he ran away.

"I must ask uncle first. Where shall I go if he lets me?" Vinzi called after the boy.

But he got no answer from Vereli, who was already far away.

"You go up to the Tower Boys," replied Russli. He was as usual close to Vinzi's side and so had heard his question.

"But I don't know where they live," replied Vinzi.

"In the tower, of course," said Russli.

"Is that the reason why you call them the Tower Boys?"

"Of course," Russli calmly informed him.

The old gray tower that had filled him with such grave misgivings rose before Vinzi's eyes now. In his wild state of fear it had seemed to

him no less than a prison in which his uncle might be living and where he might be obliged to live, too. But besides the tower he had a vague recollection of a bright meadow with shining flowers surrounding the building. His glance had hardly rested on these things in his foolish terror. Now he felt suddenly seized by an intense desire to wander up along the highway to see how all the things looked that had grown so dim in his recollection.

That evening he repeated Vereli's words to his uncle, asking at the same time what he was to do.

"Go up to the tower tomorrow, boy," answered the uncle. The grandfather was the oldest man on the whole mountain-side and one had to do his bidding.

"Whose grandfather is he?" asked Vinzi.

"Oh, the grandfather of all the so-called Tower Boys," replied the uncle, "and of a huge family besides who stay at home. Only the boys who attend to the cattle go up there. He is in fact their great, or even great-great grandfather. But as that is much too complicated to say all his relatives on the mountain call him grand-

father. He has an enormous number of grand and great-grandchildren."

"Yes, Black Vereli is decidedly the worst of the whole bunch," added Faz.

"How so?" asked the father, who saw not the slightest connection between his own statement and the words which had followed.

"Oh, I mean that the Tower Boys always start the worst mischief and Black Vereli invents most of their tricks," Faz explained. "Jos always takes his part because he can jodel so well."

"Yes he can do it like no one else and I love to hear him," affirmed Jos. "I think that the invention of naughty tricks is beginning to die down a bit. Vereli is needed for that, and he has something else in his head now. Vinzi has made him a pipe, which he has wanted for ages, and he is so determined to learn how to play that nothing will stop him. You know that if he wants a thing he never gives up till he has it."

"Those pipes are a real blessing for the whole mountain, it seems to me. They are toning down even the worst boys," said the mother, comfortably leaning back in her chair. She knew what peace it had brought to her own evenings

and was already waiting for the tones of the pipe which so quieted them.

When the boys were ready to set out to the pasture with their cattle next morning, the uncle said to Vinzi. "Go right up to the tower, for the grandfather is sure to be up by now. He sits from early morning till evening on the bench before his house sunning himself. You will have to judge when it will be time to leave. Be sure to stay as long as he wants you to."

They set out, Russli, as usual, staying a little behind Vinzi. He had attentively listened to his father's words.

"You must come back soon," he said. "You must come down as soon as you have played something for the grandfather."

"Didn't you hear what your father said, Russli?" retorted Vinzi. "I have to do what the grandfather wants me to. I'll have to stay all morning if he wishes me to."

"Then I'll tickle the cows again," Russli asserted grimly.

"That is wicked of you, Russli," cried out Vinzi full of indignation. "I always thought that you were a nice boy. Didn't I stay with you all the time and tell you all sorts of stories?

Didn't I play for you as much as ever you wanted me to? I never believed Faz when he told me naughty things about you and now I find that what I thought untrue was true after all. Do you know what I am going to do? I'll stay with Jos and Faz from now on and you can stay by yourself and I'll never come near you any more."

"Then I won't do it," said Russli, half obstinately and half repentantly.

"That's right, Russli," said Vinzi, already reconciled, "and I'll promise to cut you something on the way every time I leave you. What do you want? A walking stick?"

"No," came the decided answer.

"Do you want a flag-pole?"

"No."

"What do you want?"

"A pipe."

"But I gave you one ages ago," suggested Vinzi.

"I don't care. I want a pipe and then another and still another every time you want to make me something," Russli said stubbornly.

"All right, you shall have a pipe," Vinzi promised.

When the boys came to the pasture they

turned their herd to the right of the road towards the larch trees. But Vinzi continued on his way. Every time his three cousins called to him, "Come back soon," he answered by waving his cap to them. He felt so well and strong now that he threw his cap high into the air and caught it again with a loud shout. Vinzi had never been so wonderfully happy before. The sun was shining from a cloudless sky over the green fields, pastures and rugged mountains, against which the dark spruces were sharply outlined. He remembered having come that way, but how different it all looked now! The scene constantly grew more entrancing. The high snow-mountain stood out completely behind the wooded heights, and its great and mighty summit shimmered faintly in the sunlight. Suddenly a miracle seemed to happen. A broad stream, gleaming like silver in the early morning light, spread right across the whole mountain, but it made not a sound or motion. It was not rushing water, but a glorious, broad glacier. Vinzi had to stand still as he watched a strange blue fire flash across the expanse. He lingered a while, unable to go further. How strange that he should not have taken in all this beauty before!

Going on again he was repaid by hearing sounds as of a rustling wood in the distance. He wondered what it might be, because he knew that there was no forest here. Foaming white and roaring loudly, there suddenly appeared before him a waterfall which leaped down over steep rocks and right across the way he saw a second. Here and there gurgling mountain streams rushed down from the rocky walls, and the air that blew into his face was so deliciously fresh that he had to pause again and take deep breaths. But what was the glowing red field which stretched a short distance from him down the slope? Eagerly Vinzi ran along as if he had wings and the bracing air made him forget how steep was the slope he was climbing.

Sometimes, as the road made a curve, the red field would vanish for a while only to reappear again much nearer and still more brilliant in the sunlight. Now a well-known sound of cow-bells greeted his ears, and he wondered where the cattle were.

He had to stop again in order to look about him. At his left, below the road he could see the herd peacefully grazing in a fresh green meadow.

He saw cows of different colors and quite a number of boys. Some lay flat on the ground while others stood together in little groups. In the middle of the valley rose a gray stone tower. That was the old tower he had seen on his trip and his cousins had described to him. Also the grandfather sat leaning his back against the ancient walls exactly as his uncle Lorenz had told him he would do. The old man with the bright sun shining down upon him was gazing up at the blue sky. He wore no hat on his snow-white head and a heavy white beard fell down to his chest. The old man sitting in the sun with the cows quietly grazing about him made the most peaceful scene. Even the old tower which had frightened him so seemed to be quite a cosy abode, and Vinzi could picture all the Tower Boys leading a very happy existence there with the grandfather. He was anxious to inspect it from near, but first he had to see the red mountain-side. It could not be far from here now.

Vinzi hurried along. After a curve of the road the red, sparkling field lay before him.

Climbing over the rocky edge of the road, he went deep into the green leaves which were

covered with bright red alpine roses. They spread over the whole slope as far as he could see, and he could not help saying, " How beautiful! " to himself, over and over again.

Carefully going on, he discovered a little spot free of plants. Here he could sit down in the middle of the flowers without hurting them. In silent rapture he gazed at the glory about him.

The sun was beating down from a cloudless sky but the fresh mountain breeze fanned his cheek and made him bless the hot rays. The dark blue sky stretched close over the gleaming field of roses, the gray ranges and green, sunny slopes. The mighty snow peak opposite rose high into the air and thundering streams flung their snow-white foam sunwards, so that they sparkled in a thousand colors.

Vinzi must have been sitting there dreaming a long while. Suddenly he became conscious of the sun being nearly above his head, which meant that it was practically noon. Starting up at once, he ran in big leaps over the flowery field, putting his feet down so that he did not crush a single rose. Then he crossed the road and still kept on running across the other meadow to the old tower. Vinzi planted himself immediately in

front of the grandfather, who was still sitting on his wind-sheltered bench in the sunshine. But he had to take a deep breath before he could attempt to speak.

"What is it, boy? Why are you in such a hurry?" calmly asked the grandfather.

"I am a bit late. I meant to be here much sooner," replied the boy, having at last gained his breath. "Black Vereli sent me here because you wanted to hear me play the pipe."

"Oh, I see, you are the boy who carves the pipes and who is supposed to play so well," said the old man. "It is nice of you to come here. Sit down beside me on the bench and tell me where you come from and to whom you belong."

Vinzi, after sitting down, told the old man about his family and that he was staying for a while with his uncle Lorenz Lesa.

"I know him," said the grandfather. "He is a splendid man. Did he object to your coming up here?"

Vinzi answered that his uncle had bidden him to go and stay as long as the grandfather wished.

"Oh, I am glad; then you can play something for me. But I think we had better have some food first." With these words the old man rose,

but changing his mind suddenly, he resumed his seat again.

"I don't think it would be unseemly if the young one brought the lunch while the old one remained seated," he said, kindly patting Vinzi's shoulder. "Go around the corner here, open the door and go to the shelf. You'll find a jug of milk and everything else ready. Go and bring it."

Vinzi was gone in a minute and quickly returned with the required articles. The food was placed between them on the bench and the grandfather cut pieces of bread and cheese, inviting Vinzi to do the same.

But the boy slightly hesitated. All morning he had done only what he had felt like doing, instead of coming early and playing to the grandfather. Therefore he could not begin with a clear conscience.

"Eat, eat, boy! What's the matter? There is more than enough for us both. Why don't you begin?" asked the old man after a while with such a kindly glance from his eyes that Vinzi would have felt like doing a more difficult bidding.

"How do you like it here on our mountain?" asked the old man after a little while.

Vinzi's eyes fairly flashed. "Oh, it is wonder-

ful here. I never saw anything more beautiful in my life!" he exclaimed, still filled with his recent impressions.

At this the grandfather patted him on the back again. "Neither did I, neither did I," he said full of satisfaction. "You think just what I think. I'd like to know where it could be finer. Where do they have such golden sunshine as we have up here and pure air like that which simply fills one with health? Every one can breathe as much of it, too, as he can hold. And what strength this air and sunshine give one! I tell you I know something about it. Of course my strength is beginning to give out a bit. I am still well but not young any more. How old do you think I am, boy?"

"Maybe seventy," said Vinzi.

"Oho, is that what you think! I was seventy twenty and a few odd years ago and I was young still at that time. I thought nothing of going with heavy loads on my back down into the valley and coming up again with more. But I can't do such things now, and no more do they want me to. All the young people ask of me is to keep peace among the boys while they stay in the tower during summer. They are on the pasture during the

day, but when they come home in the evening they need some one to keep them in order; otherwise things go amiss. I sit here in the sunshine all day and that gives me ample time to think over all the blessings I have to thank our Lord in Heaven for during my long life. Since I passed my ninetieth year I do not count any more. I take every fine day as a splendid gift and looking up to Heaven in the evening, I say from the bottom of my heart, ' Thanks for it, good Father in Heaven, thanks! ' And when the time comes for me to go, I won't have far to go. Look what a short distance I will have to fly. That's one of the reasons I love it here on the mountain. It's very close to Heaven and so open that one can look about in all directions. One's thoughts easily strive upwards and make one happy, either living or dying."

Vinzi had followed the grandfather's words with keen attention. The boy was sorry when the speaker was silent at last, for he would have liked to know much more about the grandfather's solitary existence.

" What are you thinking about so earnestly? " asked the grandfather after a considerable silence between them.

"I was longing for you to tell me about your life in winter when the boys have gone home. I wonder if you stay in the tower all alone or if you have to leave despite your being so happy here," replied Vinzi.

"I have not gone to the valley for at least ten years and I do not care to," said the grandfather, inhaling a deep breath of the sunny mountain air. "I could neither stand the heavy air nor the crowds of people who get in each other's way. I don't have to live alone in the tower because the monks in the hospice up there are my good friends. You know where it is, don't you?"

"No," replied Vinzi, "and I don't even know what kind of place it is."

"It is a good place," said the old man. "They receive there in winter poor travellers who cannot go on for the cold and the masses of snow, and whom they often find lying outside half frozen. The good monks who live in the hospice fetch them in to a warm fire, then give them strengthening food and drink till they are able to travel on their way. They are my very best friends, and when the boys drive the cattle home in the autumn, I go up to live with them. You may

have seen the hospice, for it is just a little way up in that direction."

"Oh, yes, I remember it now," exclaimed Vinzi, for the picture of a big stone house on the road rose before him. He remembered having seen it on his walk and he recalled how still and dead everything about it had seemed, exactly as if no one lived there.

"A warm chimney corner is always ready for me there," continued the old man. "I sit there all winter long and hear many a good word from the monks. Once in a while I see a poor wretch who would have perished miserably but for their help. After being cared for he is able to take up his load again with fresh courage. I hear things about the world once in a while that make me glad that I am so far away.

"I can well believe it," replied Vinzi understandingly.

"How would it be if we made a little music now?" asked the grandfather after a pause. Then he set the empty pitcher, the plate and knife under the bench in order to make more room. "What would you like best to play?"

Vinzi, taking up his pipe, had begun to play a melody.

It pleased his listener so much that he had to repeat it straightway. As soon as he had finished it the second time the grandfather said, "That was a beautiful thing. Was it a hymn?"

"Yes," said Vinzi.

"How did you learn that? Boys usually whistle quite different tunes. Where did you find it?" the old man wanted to know.

"I didn't find it. I play the tune as I hear it sung. Mother sings such a song with us at home every night," Vinzi declared.

"Do you know more like that?" the grandfather inquired.

"Oh yes, lots more," Vinzi assured him.

"I'd love to know if you could play me a song I heard only once in my life. I would give a great deal if I could hear it again. But all I know about it is the refrain at the end of each verse; perhaps you could recognize it from that."

"It would be better if you could sing me parts of it," said Vinzi.

"No, no, boy, I can't sing any more," the grandfather remonstrated, "but I can tell you what the song was about and how the ending went. You see I was not always as happy as I am now. Of course when I was young like you I

was happy, for I had a mother who watched over me as yours apparently does who teaches you such nice songs. My father was dead and I had comrades who wanted me to go out with them into the world to seek adventures. As I wanted to go so much, I had to do it against her will. We went and travelled far, sometimes as soldiers, sometimes as workmen. It was a wild life, but you couldn't understand that yet. Finally, I couldn't bear it any longer. I begged them to turn back and start a new existence. But they would not hear of it, so I returned alone. It had been a long time since I had written to my mother or heard from her. When I came home I found that she was dead. 'She wouldn't have gotten sick if you had stayed at home,' our neighbor said to me. These words were deeply burnt into my soul. I wanted to begin a new life and redeem myself. But I could find no joy in anything. My conscience constantly reproached me and troubled me, and I realized I could never atone for her death. One night when I couldn't sleep for remorse I cried aloud to Heaven: 'Oh, mother, you were always ready to help me before! Please help me now, or don't I deserve it?' On awakening in the morning I clearly

heard my mother's voice saying, 'Go to church, Klaus, the bells are ringing.' She had always said this to me every Sunday morning during her life-time. I jumped out of bed and found that it was really Sunday. I hadn't been to church for a long while, but that day I went again. At first I could not follow the pastor's words. But suddenly I heard, 'And our Lord came down from Heaven to bring us mercy and forgiveness and keep us from perishing in our misery. And He gave us back our joy!' That was clearly meant for me and it went through me like a ray of sunshine. Then came the song I spoke of. I could understand every word of it because it told exactly how I felt at that moment. At the end of every verse came the following refrain:

'For the blessed song of mercy
Thrills our hearts forevermore.'

"I have never forgotten it. From then on I went to church whenever the bells called me and I heard many comforting words there that made me glad again. Do you think you could play me the song now?"

Vinzi would gladly have done the grandfather's bidding, but he did not know the song.

" Then play me one of your own, I love to hear them, too," said the grandfather comfortingly, for he realized the boy was not able to fulfil his wish.

Vinzi did so willingly and kept playing one piece after the other until loud calls and cries from the distance showed him that the boys were starting to come home.

Quickly rising, Vinzi asked the grandfather's leave to go. The latter agreed that it was high time. He could not comprehend, however, how quickly the afternoon had flown. " Can you come soon again? " he asked, and added, " Please tell your uncle Lorenz that I shall expect you soon again. Just let me say one more word. I wish you could teach our boys to play, too. That would give me something worth hearing when you are gone."

Vinzi told the old man that he was already teaching them. Unfortunately they always failed to play the melodies smoothly. They were much better at singing and quickly learned to sing new songs.

" All right, teach them some of your songs then. I suppose that you know others beside the hymns? "

"Yes, I have heard some from uncle Lorenz. If I only had words to one I know, I could teach them that," answered Vinzi.

"Then you are like me. I forget the words, too, but you are still too young to do that," was the old man's opinion.

"I haven't forgotten them. I never knew them," said Vinzi seriously.

The old man measured him with a penetrating glance, trying to see if this was meant to be a joke. But Vinzi looked far too earnest. "How can you know a song if it has no words?" he asked.

"I know a few words of it and the way it should sound, but it is so hard to make up enough words for a whole song, and I can't do it. When I was sitting among the roses this morning, I heard the song and I could sing it, except for the words. If only some one could write me a song."

Vinzi looked longingly up to the grandfather.

"Maybe I know a person who could do it," replied the latter, very pleased at the possibility of helping Vinzi. "What would your song be about?"

"About the alp-roses and the sunshine on them. The sunshine on the mountains and the

foaming water and all the beautiful things I saw there."

Vinzi's eyes sparkled as he eagerly described this. The melody he had heard kept going in his head and he could barely keep himself from singing it aloud.

"I'll let Pater Silvanus know about this and we'll see what he can do."

With this the grandfather shook Vinzi's hand once more. Then the boy ran down the mountain without stopping once till he had reached his uncle's house. Loud cries came from the pump where his three cousins were just going through their daily ablution. All rushed towards him and wanted to know what he had done all day, at the same time telling him about their own happenings. In the middle of it all Russli pulled his jacket confidentially, for he had an important communication to make. Finally, he was able to make himself heard. "I did not pinch any all day, not even one."

For reward Vinzi drew a beautiful new pipe from his pocket.

Vinzi had acquired such skill in carving pipes that he had rapidly made it that morning while sitting among the roses.

Uncle Lorenz and his aunt greeted him as heartily as if they had not seen him for a long while. After he had given the grandfather's message to his uncle, the latter replied, " Yes, yes, go up there as often as you please, only be sure to come home to us in the evening."

The aunt joined in, too, adding, " It would suit me best if things should never change and Vinzi could stay with us always."

When Vinzi soon after sat on his threshold he had a great many things to think over. His thoughts kept him so busy that he would have liked to dispense with sleeping altogether and sit there all night.

He was still filled with the grandfather's story, which had made a tremendous impression upon him. While listening to it he had had an idea, which since then had grown more vivid. Now the time seemed to have come to carry it out.

Raising the pipe to his lips he quietly began to play to himself. Sometimes he paused, silently listening to what he heard. Then he hummed again as the melodies were slowly taking shape. Vinzi looked about him. All the houses round about were dark, but all the stars sparkled down on him so radiantly that he finally grew silent and

looked in pious awe at the joyfully gleaming sky above.

"Oh, now I know it!" he cried suddenly. Raising his pipe again he lured from it the most tripping, happy tunes. Quite satisfied he at last closed his little door and lay happily down on his fragrant couch of hay.

The music seemed really to begin now, for he felt that whole choruses of angels were singing down to him from the shining stars. But Vinzi only heard this in his slumbers, for as soon as he had touched his pillow he was fast asleep.

CHAPTER VII

STILL MORE MUSIC

A GREAT song rehearsal now took place every day on the pasture. Vinzi had formed a chorus of all the boys having good voices. Some, of course, could not sing, while others did not care to do it; also some of the cow-herds had to remain with the cattle. The rehearsals took up a lot of time because Vinzi demanded the little bit he taught them every day should be perfectly sung. He could not bear false notes and whenever he heard one he cried out as if a wasp had stung him. He then made them repeat the whole passage again. Vinzi had long known that Jos and Vereli had the best and truest voices and so he chose Jos as leader for the high voices and Vereli for the alto voices. Besides doing splendid work in singing, the two boys proved most helpful in keeping the other singers in order. When any of the boys knew anything by heart, they wished to sing right out as soon as Vinzi began to play. But Jos and Vereli realized

that this would not do, so they had to restrain the eager singers till their time came.

The following Sunday had been chosen by Vinzi for the performance. He would have gladly waited, if it had been necessary, but his chorus was perfectly trained. It was the most suitable day in the week, as most of the boys had their freedom that afternoon.

Jos and Vinzi wandered up the mountain-side with their little troupe of singers. On their journey up, other boys from neighboring cottages joined them. Many even wanted to go along as listeners. In that way a considerable number had gathered together before they all approached the tower.

The grandfather was sitting, as usual, in the sunshine on his bench, and a cool mountain breeze was fanning his deeply-tinted cheeks. He looked questioningly at the approaching boys. Vinzi, Jos and Vereli, the leaders, came to within a few feet of the old man, and the others grouped themselves about in a semi-circle. Now Vinzi began to play. At first he seemed to begin a gay tune, but soon the instrument took up a sad and serious air. Finally the tones seemed to weep and sob as if some one were pleading for mercy.

At this point the chorus took up the following words, quietly giving a ray of hope:

"But the blessed song of mercy."

The lamenting tones of the pipe vibrated anew till the chorus sang a second time, this time louder and in fuller tones:

"But the blessed song of mercy."

Once more the pipe took up its pleading melody, but the chorus now took up the refrain with full strength and the words this time sounded like the veriest jubilation:

"But the blessed song of mercy
Resounds through all eternity."

The pipe joined in here with notes of triumph, and together with the voices all ended in a happy song of joy.

Everything was quiet as the grandfather sat motionless with his hands folded on his knees. One of the boys started to run away, then more followed, and soon all of them were hurrying towards the green meadow where the cows from the valley were grazing. Here they found their comrades who were in charge of the cattle. Vereli alone had remained beside Jos and Vinzi, but he also disappeared, because such quiet was not long to his taste.

When the grandfather raised his glance he seemed to return from some far-away place.

"You sang me a beautiful song," he said kindly. "Where did you find it? I suppose you taught it to the others, Vinzi?"

"I got the idea from you," replied Vinzi.

"Hm, hm," said the grandfather, "You seem to comprehend pretty well what one says to you. But where did you find the music?"

"It came to me because I wanted to sing you the song you could not remember," said Vinzi.

"It is very good of you to give an old man such pleasure. But wait! I nearly forgot something," said the grandfather, searching about in his pockets. "I have thought of you, too, for I told Pater Silvanus about your wanting a certain kind of song. You can see how good he is, for look! he brought it to me. The only condition he made is that you are to sing him the song when you have found the tune for it. Oh, here it is at last."

The grandfather now pulled out a long sheet of paper, which he gave to Vinzi. A song was written on it in firm large letters.

"I have to say something else, boys," continued the grandfather. "Jos, you know where the cellar is. Bring me the cheese which has been

cut, and one of the largest loaves of bread. Vinzi must go with you, because it is too heavy for you alone. Take it down to the boys who have sung for me today. You can have a little feast together, for you have made one for me, too. Take a cup out of the kitchen so you can take turns drinking. Xaver can milk for you the cows that give the best milk."

The grandfather always called Vereli by his real name, for the boy's father and grandfather had been called the same before him.

The two now ran away to do his bidding and found themselves puffing hard under their load while climbing the cellar-stairs. But they did so with radiant faces, for they happily looked forward to arriving at the pasture.

"Come again, boys," said the grandfather, gratefully shaking their hands. "Make some other Sunday happy for me sometime with your beautiful singing."

All the singers had remained on the huge pasture with the Tower Boys, and yells of delight greeted the laden couple. They settled down immediately to begin the feast. Their appetites proved astonishing, for many of the boys from the

small cottages thereabout usually got only potatoes for their daily fare.

Vinzi had settled a little behind the close circle. He wished to be alone in order to read the words of his song. The melody was still haunting him, and he wondered if the words and music would harmonize. Pulling out the paper, he found that he could read the fine clear writing without trouble. He read it over and over again. Suddenly a terrific longing drew him up to the field of roses, a longing which he found impossible to resist. Getting up, he quietly slipped away from the busy feast-makers. Without stopping he ran up the slope into the midst of the marvellous rose field and settled down on his chosen spot, surrounded on every side by thick clumps of bloom. Here he could hear his song again and sing it to himself. He pulled out his sheet and read:

Behold there in the evening light
The clouds like roses glowing!
No thorns have these, their grace to spite,
No briars mar the roses bright
That in the clouds are glowing.

And in this light how full of glee
Outfoams the sparkling brooklet!
White as the snow its garment free.
How pure it is, how fair to see
The gaily foaming brooklet!

Majestic in the sunset's ray
The ancient peaks are standing.
For though poor mortals go astray
And like the grass must fade away,
The mountains still are standing.

Within the golden gleaming sky
Full many a grief is melted.
Ye valley dwellers, come on high,
Come all, for here, where heaven is nigh,
Full many a grief is melted.

That evening Vinzi came tearing down the mountain-side so late that the whole family had been gathered together before the house looking for him on every side. Jos had returned several hours ago and had related to them the grandfather's delight at the music, also how he had treated them to a feast and how Vinzi had suddenly disappeared, no one knew whither. They had all vainly guessed where he might be. One member of the family after another had gone outside to see if he was coming home, till finally all of them were on the lookout. He came running along at last.

"Vinzi, Vinzi," the uncle called to him, "We almost thought you had run away."

"Oh, I'll never do that," Vinzi assured him, panting hard. "I was sitting among the alpine-roses and entirely forgot the time."

"I'd do just the opposite," declared Faz. "If I had to sit up there away from everybody and with not even a cow to talk to, I'd have to think all the time, I wonder how late it is?"

"Perhaps you made some pipes?" Russli wanted to find out.

"No, Russli, I'll make some more tomorrow," Vinzi replied with understanding.

The father urged them to go into the house, for he longed for a little Sunday music, and first of all for supper, because the mother had refused to give them any till Vinzi should come back. They were all very hungry.

During the next few days Vinzi spent many a happy hour in his beloved rose field, which he could do with a clear conscience. Jos knew what was going on and he saw to it that Vinzi got the fine morning hours to himself. He therefore sent him up as soon as they reached the pasture, for he was dreadfully eager to learn a new song. After a few days Vinzi called his chorus together, and by this time they made such rapid progress that he had to wonder at them. All they had to do was to follow the melody the pipe was playing, which was most pleasing, besides being easy to remember. The chorus sang with great enthu-

siasm, for the words were easily understood and stayed in their memory without difficulty. They always hated to stop when the time came. Vinzi had only to accompany the song a few times with Jos and Vereli as leaders and all the boys on every pasture could sing it.

When they got together in the morning one would cry to the other: "Let's sing our song," for they fully felt that it was their very own.

When Sunday came, all the musicians proceeded up to the grandfather, who having already got wind of the affair, looked forward eagerly to their visit. The number was even larger than the first time, and the performers in their eagerness had barely reached his bench when they began their song. The volume of their voices increased till the end.

"Bravo, bravo!" exclaimed the grandfather delighted. "Once more! Once more!"

With undiminished enthusiasm the whole performance was repeated.

When Vinzi saw that the singers went on smoothly without him, he signalled to Jos and Vereli. Lightly as lizards the three slipped quickly away.

This had been planned beforehand, for Vinzi

was eager to do what the grandfather had bidden him do; but as he was convinced that so much noise would be unseemly for the hospice, he had decided not to let the others know where he was going. If they had known, he probably could not have prevented the boys from running after them.

As soon as they had reached the road, the three boys were able to wander along a little more slowly, and they soon saw the large building of stone which Vinzi remembered so clearly. What a terrible impression it had made on him! How silently it lay there, and how frightened he had been when he had thought it might be his uncle's home! How different it looked now as it lay peacefully in the sunshine, and seemed even to beckon to the boys! Vinzi knew now that here lived the good monks who helped half-frozen travellers in winter as they struggled up the mountain in bad weather. When they stood before the door, Vereli pulled the bell-rope so mightily that they could hear it re-echo inside. Soon after a very small old man opened the heavy door a trifle.

"That's the porter," said Vereli.

"What do you want?" asked the old man.

"We want to see Pater Silvanus," quickly replied Vereli.

The old man, after examining the three suspiciously, said finally in a measured tone: "Well, boys, Pater Silvanus can't be brought out for a joke. He has usually very different customers from you. What do you want from him?"

"We had better go if Pater Silvanus has no time for us," said Vinzi timidly.

But Vereli could not be disposed of so easily. "We have a message for him from grandfather," he said unruffled. "Grandfather told us to give it to Pater Silvanus himself."

At this the old man opened the door a little wider and let the three boys enter. "You can wait here," he said curtly, leaving them and going down a dim, long corridor, where they could still hear his dragging footsteps after they could not see him any more.

After a while a firm and rapid step came towards them.

"Here he comes," said Vereli, unabashed, when the monk with a long garment stood before them and examined them with penetrating glances.

"You are one of the boys from the tower, you

carry their stamp about you," he said, turning to Vereli. " And who are your companions? "

" He belongs to Lorenz Lesa, near the chapel, and he is his cousin, Vinzi Lesa, from Leuk," explained Vereli.

A curious smile flitted over the monk's features at the mention of the last name. Looking at Vinzi once more, he said pleasantly, " Come with me."

Then he led them through the long, echoing corridor, and after opening a door in the rear, bade them enter. It was a very large room with dark panelled walls, against which ancient leather chairs with high backs were ranged. In the middle of it stood a huge square table, but Vinzi could not take his eyes from an object he had noticed in a corner. It looked slightly like a high cupboard and somewhat resembled Alida's piano, but was a trifle higher. Standing in front of the trio, the monk asked the grandfather's wishes.

Vinzi felt that it was for him to speak. He expressed himself as willing to sing the song which the kind Father had sent him through the grandfather.

" Good, I'll be glad to hear it," said the monk.

Upon noticing that Vinzi still hesitated, he added: "What else do you want to ask me, boy?"

"Shall I sing it or may I play?" asked Vinzi.

"Play, for I must hear your pipe," Pater Silvanus replied with a friendly smile.

They lost no time and began. Vinzi, entirely sure of his two singers and much encouraged by the monk's great kindness, played, not the melody, but a little accompaniment which he had practiced for himself.

At the end of the song Pater Silvanus glanced at Vinzi affectionately. Then laying his hand on the boy's shoulder and looking him in the eyes he said, "I'd like to know something, boy, and you must be sure to tell me the truth. Have you ever heard this melody before or one that was a little like it to some other words?"

"No, it belongs to this song. I only found it when I got your words from the grandfather," Vinzi replied guilelessly, looking up at the questioner with wide, honest eyes.

"I'd like to hear the song once more," said the monk. "Don't leave out either the verses or the accompaniment."

The three began again, happily, for to be

asked to repeat it was a sign that it had pleased the monk.

"Now," said Pater Silvanus, when they had come to the end, "You must hear how my harmonium sounds to it. I wonder if you'll like it?"

Going up to the big high box, he opened it and began to play.

Vinzi listened breathlessly. What wonderful deeply gripping tones! His whole heart was shaken.

And was it possible? It sounded so strangely familiar; yes, it was his own melody with the accompaniment the pipe had played. But how different, how full and rich!

Vinzi stood still in silent rapture when the tones had died away.

"Oh, that was beautiful, much more beautiful than our music," he said, quite carried away with the beautiful sounds.

"It was your song, boy, and I did not have to add much," said the monk kindly. "Come nearer; have you never before heard such an instrument?"

"No," answered Vinzi, after stepping quite near to the harmonium. "But I have heard a piano."

The monk asked Vinzi what music he had heard on the piano and Vinzi related the story of the short music lessons which he had enjoyed so much.

Stroking Vinzi's curly hair a few times, the monk smiled sympathetically. Then he asked, "Do you think you would get pleasure from learning how to play my instrument?"

Vinzi hardly knew if he had heard aright, he was so thrilled. With glowing eyes he looked silently at the monk.

"Well, I suppose you mean yes."

"A thousand times yes," Vinzi finally was able to say.

"Good! Tell your uncle Lorenz about it and let me know tomorrow morning what he says. If he doesn't object, we can play a little every morning."

Giving his hand to the boys, Pater Silvanus, after saying a kind word to each of them in turn, opened the door and let them out, and they strolled gaily down the mountain-side. Vinzi was walking in a perfect dream beside his companions, who were both talking with animation. He kept on hearing Pater Silvanus' words, "Would you get pleasure from learning how to

play my instrument?" Give him pleasure? It was a happiness he could hardly comprehend.

Vereli had turned off and gone back to the tower without Vinzi's noticing it, and before long the other two were home. During supper time Jos related to his parents how friendly Pater Silvanus had been and what he had proposed to do for Vinzi, if his father did not object.

"Of course not," said the latter at once, "I am glad that Vinzi has the chance to learn something fine."

Early next morning Vinzi came to Pater Silvanus and repeated his uncle's words with a radiant face.

"Then let us begin at once," said the monk, leading the boy to the great room with the harmonium.

These lessons differed considerably from Alida's, and the teacher seemed to forget the time as much as his pupil. One hour and a second hour had gone by, when the sudden sound of a bell reminded Pater Silvanus how late it really was. Quickly closing his instrument and giving the boy his hand, he said, "We'll go on tomorrow, but be sure to come as early as today."

Vinzi went away so filled with happiness that

he must run right over to the grandfather and tell him all the wonderful and unexpected things that had happened to him. No one could have been able to share his joy better than the grandfather, who was as pleased as if it had all happened to him.

Vinzi told of everything that the Pater had already explained and taught him, and he did not leave without giving his solemn promise often to bring reports of his progress and at the same time pipe the old man a little song. A glorious succession of days followed for Vinzi, and the further Pater Silvanus took him the more his burning desire grew to get still further. Pater Silvanus himself seemed to find pleasure in the lessons, for he taught his pupil every morning, and sometimes the lessons lasted fully three hours. When the monk had to leave for other duties, he let Vinzi stay and practice what he had prepared with him. The boy sat many an hour in the quiet house. No noise ever interrupted him, and the time flew by unnoticed. When the sun finally slanted across the harmonium through a certain window, he knew that evening was near. Quickly shutting the instrument, he noiselessly went down the long corridor and out to the road. This gave

him time enough to visit the grandfather and find his cousins and their comrades still gathered together. He was greeted with fresh enthusiasm every time. A chorus of various frightful noises always followed his arrival, because every owner of a pipe wanted to show him what he had learned to play. Vinzi could not help wondering at the number of boys who owned pipes since he had left the pasture. The boys had possibly found out how to make them themselves.

His bargain with Russli had been firmly kept. Every morning going up or in the evening coming home the little one was inseparable from Vinzi.

"Russli, you have enough pipes now," said Vinzi one day while he was wandering home with his little comrade behind the cows. He had just delivered his daily pipe and added: "In all this time you should have learnt not to tickle the cows, Russli, without always expecting a reward."

"And so I have," Russli agreed, "Because I have so much to do nowadays."

Vinzi could not help wondering at Russli's quick response; in fact all the little boy's mischievous deeds had really come only from idleness.

"What keeps you so busy?" asked Vinzi.

" I'll show it to you, but no one else must know about it," replied Russli mysteriously.

He led Vinzi away from the road to the old larch trees, where the two used to sit in the old days when Vinzi had made his first pipes.

" Tell me something, Russli," Vinzi began again, " did you put all your pipes in a pile together or did you give them to the boys who had none. So many have good pipes now and not the kind they used to make themselves."

" I don't ever give away my beautiful pipes," replied Russli, quite hurt at a supposition throwing doubt on the sensibleness of his actions. " Come, you can see for yourself."

They were standing at the exact place where Vinzi used to sit on a high mossy place beside the fragrant violets. Stooping down, Russli picked up several pieces of moss-covered earth which lay there cleverly joined together. He put them aside and shovelled away the loose earth underneath with both hands, disclosing a rather large hole. After lifting out a strong folded paper serving as cover, Russli asked his companion to look in. To his intense surprise Vinzi saw a collection of most varied objects: piles of nuts and dried prunes, match boxes, colored marbles, old

knives and tobacco boxes, a little pump, a leather purse and a watch-chain of brass.

"What is this, Russli? To whom do all these things belong?" asked Vinzi, truly astonished.

"They all belong to me. I traded one of these things for every pipe you gave me. Do you see now?" asked Russli, proudly glancing at his storehouse.

"But what are you going to do with them all?" Vinzi inquired, still puzzled.

"I'll keep them and then I'll trade them again for something better. You see the pipes are only common wood, after all," Russli said confidentially.

Vinzi had to laugh.

"You must become a tradesman, Russli, for you seem to understand all about it. But you won't have anything more to do now, since our bargain is off."

"Oh yes, I'll have just as much work as ever. I first uncover my hole every morning, dig away the earth and count everything to see if anything has been stolen in the night. Then I have to pack and cover them up and put on the moss in such a way that no one can find the place. In the after-

noon I have to sit on the lookout so that no one finds my cave and takes my things."

Vinzi could not comprehend these watchful exertions on behalf of such treasure, for he totally lacked the tradesman's spirit. He was glad, however, that this new activity kept the little fellow busy. He was convinced that he would leave the cows in peace now, even without his usual reward.

The month of August had passed and the first fog was drifting over the mountains. Several times messages had been brought up from Leuk to say that the time was drawing near for Vinzi to come home. The boy's parents felt that they had taken advantage of their relatives' kindness long enough and they begged their cousin to take the next opportunity of sending the boy home with someone. Word had always been sent back to Leuk to the effect that the summer was not over and that no one wanted to let Vinzi go. Furthermore he was so well and happy that the parents might let him prolong his stay on the mountain. Father Lorenz was just entering the room where his wife was preparing the evening meal with her accustomed calm. He sat down on a chair, for no special work had to be done till the boys returned with the cattle and after a mo-

ment's thought, said, " Have you noticed how much Vinzi has changed lately? "

" In what way? " asked his wife.

" He seems suddenly to have grown a whole year or two older," said Lorenz, " ever since he began to spend most of his time with Pater Silvanus. I notice it in the way he plays his pipe and the way he sings and talks. It is as if the boy had been transplanted from the shadow into the sunshine. Everything in him seems to have blossomed out suddenly."

" I don't quite understand what you mean," replied the woman, " but I always said that Vinzi looks as fresh and neat as a young appletree in bloom. And I say another thing besides. If Vinzi were a beggar-boy, I'd adopt him right away and I'd love him just as much as my own boys. I can say that and I'll stick to it."

" Well, so you can," said the man with a smile. " But do you know, if Vinzi had been a vagabond without the kind of mother they say he has, he would never have been the same. He belongs to a well-brought-up family and comes from parents who look after their children. That's the reason why he is so nice."

Heavy steps approached the door at that mo-

ment—clearly not the pattering the boys usually made, which was always accompanied with loud yodels and cries.

"Who is outside?" asked Lorenz, opening the door.

A well-knit man whom he knew as a fruit merchant from Leuk stood outside. Lorenz immediately offered him his hand.

"I haven't seen you for a long time, Lesa. How are things with you? I come with a message from your cousin down there and he sends you his love," said the man heartily, shaking Lorenz by the hand.

The latter was a little startled, because he felt sure that the visit had been made on Vinzi's behalf. The man had often travelled over the mountain before and had practically never come to see him. He invited him to step inside and make himself at home. But this could not be done as the merchant had a wagon and two pairs of lively horses waiting for him. He only wanted to deliver his message from Vinzenz Lesa, who had only heard yesterday that a team was going across the mountain. He had, therefore, not had time to write a letter. The farmer had been anxious to use this good opportunity of having his

boy brought home. All the fruit dealer added was that he expected to return in two days, when his business was done, and take the boy along.

Lorenz took the matter so much to heart that he could say nothing. He saw that Vinzi must leave in two days.

" I'll be here on Tuesday at eight in the morning, Lesa," concluded the man, casting a questioning look at the silent farmer. " I suppose you understand me."

" Oh, yes, only too well," replied the other. " The boy will be ready for you in time, you can count on that."

He followed the man to the road, where stood a great wagon loaded with sacks and harnessed to four strong horses. Just as the big team drove off with loud tinkling of bells, the boys came down singing and shouting with the cattle.

Lorenz walked towards them with a heavy heart. Should he give his merry boys the unwelcome news at once? Then all their happiness would vanish at once. Lorenz had a soft heart and found himself unable to do it. Greeting the boys in a carefree manner, he let everything go its accustomed round.

After supper the singing began as usual, and

they sang one song after another, as had grown to be the custom of the house. They sang as merrily as larks in spring, only the father could not quite join in heartily, for a heavy load was on his heart.

He realized that he must tell them that evening, as the time was already so short. Just after the mother had said the customary words, "I suppose we have to stop now, nine o'clock has struck," he made his announcement in a few clear words. Quite thunderstruck, everyone sat silent with surprise and sorrow. The mother was the first to regain her speech.

"Well, I hope you said that it was out of the question and that we cannot give up the boy at such short notice," she said with an animation not usual to her. "I'd like to know what he means in coming here and trying to rob us of the boy without the slightest ceremony, the way one might pull off a branch from a hedge. I hope you gave him a proper talking to."

"The man has not come to do us harm," Lorenz said calmly. "You mustn't forget that Vinzi's parents can call him home whenever they please. Won't you allow them some interest in the boy? Besides, no one can deny that the opportunity is splendid."

By this time the boys also had regained control of their emotions and lost no time in giving vent to such outcries and objections that the father suggested they all go to bed. Often good ideas had come over night during sleep, he said, and these words proved to have an excellent effect. Each boy thought that a good idea might come to him which might prevent Vinzi's departure. The mother was hoping that the father would find some obstacle to the journey, for all his best ideas always came over night. But by saying that the best thoughts come over night the father had meant to say that they would in time realize that they would have to bear the inevitable.

Vinzi had not said a word. When he sat on his threshold later on, looking up at the stars, he was conscious of a deep inner conflict. He looked forward to seeing his mother and Stefeli again, yes and his father, too. Maybe the latter would be kind to him now as he used to be in the old days Vinzi remembered so well, when he would let the boy ride on his knees and would say to him, "Just ride ahead, Vinzi; as soon as you can ride you shall have a horse." Vinzi could not quite remember when his father had begun to treat him less kindly. He hardly even knew the reason why.

On the other hand was the full realization that all his marvellous life on the mountain with these kind people had come to an end. Yes, and the music, all the music, too. There was no one who would be able to help him at home, no one. Should the whole thing really be over for good and all? His heart contracted painfully at this thought, but the next moment he found joy again in the happy anticipation of going home and seeing his loved ones.

Even if the music must stop when he got home, he would not entirely lose his good teacher, Pater Silvanus. As consolation remained the hope that he would probably return some day, and this thought was his last comfort before he went to sleep.

In the morning there was no time for talk and arguments, for they had to make an early start. Jos and Faz were wandering off with the cows and Vinzi was just following with Russli, when Uncle Lorenz drew Vinzi to one side and said in a low voice, " It can't be helped Vinzi, and I am sure you'll be glad to go home. I specially wanted to tell you so you can take leave of Pater Silvanus and the grandfather. It's your last day, for the wagon will come for you tomorrow at eight."

This settled it for good. Vinzi went away silently, which was far from pleasing Russli. "You ought to talk to me," he said a little crossly after they had gone quite a distance.

"I can't talk well today, something seems to choke me," replied Vinzi. "But don't be unhappy. As soon as I get home I'll send you something for your collection."

"You don't need to go home at all," Russli said with firm conviction. "Faz has thought out something to stop your going. He told Jos about it at the pump. He is going on the street tomorrow morning to wait for the wagon, and as soon as it stops he means to climb up and say that he is the boy from Leuk. Then the man will drive off, and only when they come to the other side of the mountain will Faz jump down and say that he is not the right boy after all. Then he'll run back. Do you see now? The man can't do anything then for it will be too far for him to turn back."

Vinzi was not convinced that his trip could be prevented that way, but he felt quite touched that Faz was so anxious to keep him. He really had seen the least of Faz.

"What are you going to send me for my collection?" Russli inquired.

" I don't want to tell you," replied Vinzi. " If it is a surprise, you'll like it so much better."

" Is it something to eat?" Russli asked, nevertheless.

" No, and not anything to drink, either," said Vinzi, " but I won't tell you anything more about it or it won't be a surprise."

After taking leave of Russli at the pasture Vinzi went up to the convent as usual. He had been told always to go straight to the large room and wait for Pater Silvanus there. This was usually only a short time, but when the Pater entered today, Vinzi did not stand in his usual mood of happy anticipation at the harmonium, and his eyes did not glisten. On the contrary he came up to the monk quite crushed, and after a questioning look sadly informed him that this was to be the last lesson, as he was going home tomorrow.

" Oh, what a shame, what a shame! " said Pater Silvanus slowly. " But won't you be able to keep up your music at home? "

Vinzi fought as well as he could to keep back the tears at this question. Despite his downcast eyes his teacher saw that he had not been able

to restrain them as he answered, " No, I don't think so."

" Courage, boy," said Pater Silvanus, kindly patting him on the shoulder. " Keep up your spirits! It is always lovely to go home again, and if God finds that music is the right thing for you, it is easy enough for Him to send someone into your path who will help you further. Besides, you are sure to come up to us again and as soon as you do, we'll take it up again."

The monk had seized Vinzi's hand in a fatherly way and led him out. In the doorway he gave the boy his blessing and heartily said, " God protect you! " after which he took leave of his pupil.

The boy had barely been able to mumble his thanks, for the tears were choking him. He felt intensely grateful that the teacher had made the leave-taking so short, because he could not possibly have controlled himself any longer.

Vinzi went toward the place where the dark roses had bloomed. The bushes were still green, but few roses remained.

He gazed about him once more. The sun had just parted the fog, and all about him began to gleam, the snow peaks, the mountain streams, the

walls of rock, and above all the deep blue sky. He was glad to see it once more.

He next ran to the tower where the grandfather occupied his accustomed seat in the sunshine.

"You come early today; that is right," he greeted the approaching figure. "But what is wrong, boy? What is the matter?" he added as soon as Vinzi stood before him. "That certainly will make us all sad," he replied, when Vinzi had informed him of the reason for his early visit. "Do you know, boy, my hope has been all along that you would come and sing me my song in case I should die. But I might still be here next summer, so let us hope that you'll be here again, too. We'll part with that thought now." The grandfather heartily shook Vinzi's hand, as he was unwilling to detain him longer. His relatives probably expected him home soon, as it was his last day with them.

Vinzi hurried straight home, for the grandfather probably was right. His aunt Josepha, who had meanwhile come to the conclusion that Vinzi's departure could not be prevented, rejoiced when she saw him coming. She could now talk quietly to him a bit. The suddenness of it all had

destroyed her accustomed calm and she had longed to see him.

Aunt Josepha and Vinzi again sat together as on the day of his arrival. Her happy frame of mind was fully restored when Vinzi assured her that he had no better wish than to come back to the mountain again another year. He hoped that he might be one of her household again and sleep in his lovely fragrant chamber.

When the family sat together in the evening, Father Lorenz said, " Come now! Singing is the best remedy against sad thoughts."

He began a song himself. The others, joining in, kept it up right through the evening.

Next day Faz's plan did not succeed. Just as the brothers were ready to depart and were taking leave from Vinzi, they heard the repeated sounds of a whip. This warned Father Lorenz that the fruit dealer had arrived even earlier than he had said. As he could not leave his horses, he wanted to notify them of his coming and looking at the road a few steps away from the house, he saw that his signal had been understood.

The whole family including even the inmates of the stable, strolled over to the street, and the

fruit dealer could not help wondering at the strange procession.

Vinzi climbed up to his high seat, and after he had taken leave of each separately, the horses started off. All five gazed after Vinzi with genuine grief, and Russli alone felt slightly consoled by the thought of the promised surprise.

When the wagon passed the spot where the tower stood in the meadow, the whole edge of the road was peopled with a crowd of noisy boys. More and more seemed to gather and finally they thundered a loud "Hurrah!" and cried "Come again!" which was repeated a second time in such a noisy way that the four horses actually reared. Black Vereli had been the instigator of this, and at the last greeting of the Tower Boys his voice could be distinctly heard above all others.

At his bench alone sat the grandfather, waving his hat high in the air, and Vinzi replied by swinging his cap.

In the convent a window opened and a hand kindly waved good-bye to Vinzi. It was that of Pater Silvanus.

After a short upward stretch by wild mountain beeches and old gnarled fir-trees the drive quickly went downwards into the valley.

CHAPTER VIII

UNEXPECTED HAPPENINGS

STEFELI'S summer after Vinzi's departure had passed much more pleasantly than she could have forseen. This was due to Mr. Delrick, who never started off on a long walk without calling into the room and asking, " Can Stefeli come with me?"

As the child had given up her life on the pasture since Vinzi had gone away, the mother always welcomed this opportunity of sending her out. Stefeli had really been obliged to sit at home a great deal, and the poor child could not help fretting and sighing. Every time she heard that question, she gladly tossed the horrid long stocking aside and skipped out into the sunshine. There was no end to all the things Stefeli discussed with her companion. He was always interested in whatever she told him about herself and Vinzi, their life at home and on the pasture. He heard about the music lessons and the strange consequences they had brought, also how the members of the household differed on certain subjects.

In this way Mr. Delrick acquired a minute knowledge of the happenings in the Lesa household. But he became intimate with the three members of the family in other ways besides. Vinzenz Lesa liked to spend his free evenings on the bench before his house. Here the walnut tree wafted to him the perfume of its fragrant leaves. When he smoked his pipe, he was always glad if Mr. Delrick came to talk to him, for the farmer loved to discuss the affairs of the world. Mr. Delrick who had a wide knowledge, could explain many things that were not quite clear to him and also showed a lively interest in everything connected with agriculture. They discussed the problems of the farm together, and even when Mr. Lesa was the instructor, Mr. Delrick's suggestions proved very useful. Many changes and improvements were made on the place in consequence.

Mr. Delrick's conversation with Mrs. Lesa was very different. It always drifted to the same subject, even if they had begun to talk of something else. This absorbing subject was Vinzi. The mother had told Mr. Delrick of Vinzi's intense love of music from the time he had been a little lad, and how the father's whole ambition was

centered on bringing him up as a successful farmer. The father's pride and joy consisted in the work he was doing and he naturally expected the boy to look after the property some day. This conflict filled her with deep anxiety. She saw no way out of the difficult situation and was constantly anticipating some great sorrow as the final outcome.

Mr. Delrick was filled with sympathetic interest and tried to allay her anxiety. He comforted her by saying that young boys often put aside such fancies, especially when a smiling future lay before them, as was the case with Vinzi. Her troublesome thoughts kept on recurring nevertheless, and it was hard for the mother to anticipate the future calmly. His sympathetic words seemed to ease her heart, however, and therefore he regularly led back to their usual subject of conversation.

In this way Mr. Delrick had succeeded in becoming the special friend and confidant of every member of the little household. Whenever a question came up which was hard to solve, Stefeli, as well as her father and mother, said right away, " We must ask Mr. Delrick, he'll know," or when

something was worrying them, "If we ask Mr. Delrick, he'll tell us what to do."

When the good news was brought from the mountain that Vinzi was loved there by old and young and had grown so merry that everybody else had grown still more so, Mr. Delrick took as lively an interest in the news as if he were a member of the family, too. The mother remained rather quiet, but he as well as the father could not help hoping that the lad had at last found satisfaction in his work. He looked forward, therefore, to the happy reunion of the little family in which he had grown so intimate before he left them.

The day came when father Lesa had given his wife, in the presence of Mr. Delrick, the news of Vinzi's homecoming in five days. Meeting an old acquaintance who was driving across the mountain, he had made use of the opportunity to ask him to bring his boy home. This the man had promised to do.

The mother's heart beat with joyous anticipation, and Stefeli in her excitement could not sit still any longer but flew restlessly here and there in the most aimless fashion. She felt as if she could not possibly live through those days. She

constantly counted the hours; if a day had twenty-four hours, five days had five times as many. Oh, that made a dreadful lot of hours. But she had reckoned the hours when she was asleep and luckily one did not feel those. So the counting had to begin anew. Strangely enough the fifth day had come at last and much sooner than she had dared to hope.

Stefeli had returned from a stroll with Mr. Delrick just as her father had come in from the field. "Vinzi may come any moment now," he said to the mother. "Let's have supper so he can sit right down with us."

Mr. Delrick was called and they began to eat. Stefeli could scarcely swallow from nervousness, and the mother, too, could not disguise her agitation.

"Here he comes!" suddenly cried the child, as she bounded away.

None of the others had heard anything, but a few moments later Stefeli entered the room, triumphantly holding Vinzi's hand. The joy of the parents at their son's return was not noisy, but it could not be doubted. Vinzenz Lesa's look betokened real pride when he led the boy up to Mr. Delrick.

The latter gazed at him keenly, for his thoughts had long been busy with him. He did not need to wonder when he saw the splendid lad who had so completely won his mother's heart and upon whom his father had built his hopes.

Everybody sat down, and Vinzi was asked to tell about his relatives. He grew constantly more lively and could not say enough of their kindness to him. When the father wished to know how the pasture up there had pleased him, Vinzi in blissful remembrance described the mountain-pasture to them. The violets up there filled the air with fragrance and the high larches spread their wide branches over the moss-covered stones. The cows grazed quietly between the trees so that their bells resounded far and wide like a song of peace.

The mother asked if beautiful flowers grew on the pasture. Here Vinzi grew still more enthusiastic and told them about the red field of roses which gleamed in the sunshine and from below made the whole mountain look like fire. Vinzi also spoke of his sleeping room and how he had loved to have his own little house which was filled with the delicious fragrance of hay.

Father and mother looked quite amazed at

their son. Never before had he spoken with such surety and animation, and both had the same impression. They said to themselves that Vinzi was not the boy who had left them. The father added to himself, "He has matured up there. That is good, for he'll know now what he wants." And the mother thought, "New life has sprung up within him. I wonder what will be the outcome."

Next morning Stefeli was on her feet especially early, for the joy of having Vinzi with her again had not let her sleep any longer. She had wanted to knock on his door in order to keep him from oversleeping. Now everything would have to go back to the old order and they would be able to go together to the pasture as of yore, something she had a tremendous longing for.

Just as she put her finger to the door, Vinzi opened it and came out completely dressed.

Stefeli drew back amazed.

"But you get up dreadfully early!" she exclaimed. "You never used to do that, Vinzi; that's why I wanted to call you."

"Now you see that I can do it, too," Vinzi said, laughing at her surprise. "On the mountain I always got up early. When one impatiently looks forward to something pleasant, sleep goes

off easily. One can jump out of bed then. You see I have still the habit."

"What was it that made you so happy? What did you look forward to every day?" asked Stefeli surprised.

"Come, I'll tell you," said Vinzi, going downstairs.

Under the open door stood the father taking a look at the weather. He too, had only just come out of his bedroom. He turned around.

"What, you up already?" he said, astonished. "That's a good sign. You learned something worth while up there, Vinzi, for you did not use to be the first in the morning. Come and walk over to our walnut trees till your mother calls us to breakfast. Don't you think our trees are fine, and the grass about them, too? I hope you have learned to see that it is not quite so bad here at home. It is beautiful here, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes," assented Vinzi from the bottom of his heart, looking up to the rich foliage of the walnut trees under whose shade he had spent so many happy hours.

"I suppose you found out up there how fine the life of a farmer really is. If you have done so, you'll realize now how beautiful our place is. You

could not possibly have a better prospect than to own and cultivate such a fine farm. Don't you agree with me that it is the best anybody could hope for? "

" I know something I'd like much better," replied Vinzi with hesitation. Then he was silent.

In surprise the farmer gazed at his son.

" Listen to me, Vinzi. I don't mind if you enjoyed the mountain so much, and I wont say a word against it. Only I don't understand what you should have found up there better than we have. What is it? Tell me!"

" Oh, the most beautiful thing I know is Pater Silvanus' harmonium in the hospice. My dearest wish would be to learn to play it as well as he does," answered Vinzi.

Vinzenz Lesa directed a searching glance at his son. After a pause he said, " Do you mean that seriously, Vinzi, or is it meant to be a joke? "

" Oh, no, I mean it," answered Vinzi.

" So," said the father abruptly. " Now I'll tell you something, too, for you ought to know what I think. I sent you away because I wanted you to learn all about farming in company with those jolly boys. You simply have to learn to enjoy it sooner or later. I thought that your eyes

had been opened and you had matured and come back more sensible. Now I find you just as childish as when you started, with nothing in your head but nonsense and foolish music. But I'll find other ways and means to teach you sense. After all there must be some way for a person to see how lucky he is. I should never have thought that you could have started such rubbish up there, too. Well, that settles it! You shall never go back! I'll still find a way."

Vinzi had listened calmly to everything the father had said. But the last words seemed to crush him like a thunderbolt. The moment his father turned and went towards the house, he threw himself on the ground. By pressing his face into the grass he tried to stifle his violent sobs. He had secretly feared that his father would not want to hear anything about his longing to study music, and he had not dared to have any hope in that respect. All his finest anticipations, however, had been built upon returning to the mountain. Everything was now at an end and the terrible words, "You shall never go back," resounded over and over again.

"Vinzi, you are to"—cried Stefeli now, but she stopped suddenly and ran over to him.

"What is it, Vinzi?" she asked, terribly frightened on hearing his sobs and groans.

But the boy could give her no reply.

"I am sure you have to come," Stefeli said timidly, "If you could only stop, Vinzi. You must come to breakfast, for father is already sitting down and mother sent me for you."

Vinzi jumped up and ran to the pump. By washing his eyes over and over again he hoped to remove the traces of his tears.

"It doesn't matter, just come now," Stefeli urged. "Mr. Delrick never comes down to breakfast, father doesn't pay attention, and mother won't say anything. Please come now."

As the two entered, the father threw a sharp glance at Vinzi, who took his seat with a drooping head. Vinzenz Lesa pushed his half-emptied cup from him and, rising, went quickly out.

He could not stand the sight of tears, least of all from his boy, who was more precious to him than his estate. The mother gazed after him surprised.

"What is the matter with father? He didn't even empty his cup," she said, glancing at Vinzi, who just then raised his eyes. "But for heaven's sake, Vinzi, what is wrong with you?" she cried,

much more concerned still. "Your eyes are swollen and red. What has happened?"

Vinzi wanted to say something but could not utter a sound. Laying his head upon his arm, he burst out crying.

The mother's face expressed the greatest anxiety as she looked at him. Stefeli quickly swallowed her milk, then ran outside.

"If only Mr. Delrick would come," she sighed. Stefeli had noticed that whenever her parents sought his advice, affairs were usually straightened out, so she was most anxious to find him now.

Mr. Delrick had just left his room and was that moment coming downstairs.

"All ready to start?" he asked kindly, when Stefeli bounded to him and gave him her hand. "Will you take a morning walk with me?"

Stefeli had hoped for this and willingly started on her way with her desired companion. He soon heard what lay heavily on her heart; how Vinzi had red and swollen eyes from crying and the father had pushed away his cup of coffee before finishing it and had quickly gone out; also how terribly sad the mother looked, more sad than she had ever seen her.

" But I am sure you can help us," Stefeli concluded with firm conviction.

" I'll do what I can," Mr. Delrick promised, smilingly.

But the child's words had made him very thoughtful; he seriously wondered if the mother's sad supposition would be realized now. The thought worried him the more, as he had fixed upon his departure within the next few days, having planned to meet a friend at the Italian lakes.

When the two returned from their walk, matters had not improved. Vinzi had finally told his mother the words that had crushed him so completely. He thought that everything now was over, but his mother comforted him by saying that the father's words were probably not final. If only Vinzi tried hard to stick to his work and did everything to please his father, showing in that way that he really cared for what he wanted of him, the time would surely come when he would be allowed to go back to his friends.

But Vinzi shook his head. "Father won't ever let me go back there, for he said that I was finding pleasure in something he does not want me to do. And it's true. I understand now what he means, and I never quite knew before."

To this the mother said nothing, for she could not help feeling that Vinzi was right. Would the boy be sent away again, and where? Her husband had another relative, an older brother, with whom he used to manage their property in Freiburg, till their old cousin in Leuk had died. Her husband had taken charge of it, as they had inherited it together. He had felt that, as the beautiful place was so badly run down, it was better to look after it himself for a number of years, if he wanted to bring it up again. Her husband's brother was as silent and unsociable as the old cousin who used to live here had been, and he also looked quite as unkempt. Vinzenz Lesa had left a hired man on the farm, who looked after things. His brother never wanted to undertake anything new and only hoped that Vinzenz Lesa would soon return.

Mrs. Lesa knew that there had been rather odd members in the Lesa family from time to time and suddenly a new anxiety rose in her heart. If the father should really decide to send Vinzi to his father's old farm in order to teach him interest in farm work, he naturally would find no other distractions there. Mightn't the boy, who had always been different from other children, become more peculiar? He might in the exclusive

company of his uncle get rather odd in his ways. People had told her that the old man who used to live in Leuk would sit by the hour before his barn staring straight in front of him. People used to call him Starri from Leuk.* Their brother in Freiburg was supposed to do the same. Such names easily become current, and as every one knew where the Lesa family originally came from, he, too, was called by the people the Starri of Leuk.

When Mrs. Lesa's thoughts had travelled thus far, she felt still more worried. The father's chief cause of complaint against the boy was that he always stared into the distance, not seeing and hearing what went on before his eyes. Would it be possible that her lively, splendid Vinzi should turn into the third Starri of Leuk?

Mrs. Lesa was suddenly roused from her disturbing thoughts by Stefeli's entrance. The child told her that Mr. Delrick had already come back from his walk and was sitting in Vinzi's room talking to the boy. Quickly she set about preparing his breakfast for as he had come back so much earlier than usual, she was not yet ready for him.

* The Starer from Leuk.

Mr. Delrick knew about Vinzi's keen passion for music as well as the father's wishes and desires for his son's future, with the original cause of Vinzi's stay on the mountain. But he had not understood from Stefeli's words what had brought on Vinzi's tears and the father's anger so soon after the boy's happy return. As he took the greatest interest in the weal and woe of the Lesa family, he wished to know if he could not help them somehow. His stay in the house was to be of very short duration, that was why he had come back so soon from his stroll. He had gone to the darkly brooding Vinzi and informed him that he was planning to go to the Italian lakes and in two days would travel across the Simplon. If Vinzi had any messages for friends there, he would be glad to deliver them, as he expected to spend the night there.

For a moment a ray of sunshine flitted over Vinzi's face.

"Are you also going to see Pater Silvanus and the grandfather?" he asked, with burning eagerness.

"I don't know who they are," replied Mr. Delrick. "But tell me about all your friends there and what happened to you on the mountain.

Then you can tell me what messages I am to take to them."

To be able to speak about things which were in his inmost thoughts poured balm on Vinzi's aching heart. Mr. Delrick's deep sympathy and understanding of his joy in his music studies with Pater Silvanus made it possible for him to tell about everything that had made him so happy on the mountain. He was willing enough to do whatever work he was set to do, Vinzi concluded, but the idea of never playing any more or hearing more music was too dreadful. He had till now always had the hope that he could spend next summer on the mountain and could then continue his lessons with Pater Silvanus, but today his father had definitely told him that he was never to go back.

The matter began to grow clearer to Mr. Delrick.

"Tell me, Vinzi," he said, after a pause, "did the Pater urge you to keep up your music at home or did he only mean to take it up again when you went back to him?"

Vinzi reported the Pater's injunction, also his own reply, telling how impossible this was on account of his father's objection to it.

"Would you like to learn an instrument in order to give yourself pleasure by playing, Vinzi?" said Mr. Delrick. "Did you ever think of making music your whole and only life's work? I suppose you could not even imagine that?"

Vinzi's eyes flamed.

"Oh, yes, I could, and I thought about it long ago, when I was on the mountain. I could imagine well how it would be," Vinzi assured him. "I don't only want to study an instrument, but to learn everything about music. Pater Silvanus knows everything and can explain how to put the tones together in order to make harmonious music. Also how to write down melodies one has in one's head so people can read it again from a sheet. He had already begun to explain it all and teach me how to do it. It was so wonderful! I wouldn't mind shoveling snow all day and working hard the way they have to do up there in winter, if only I could spend the evenings with Pater Silvanus, for he said he would keep on teaching me. Now I'll never be allowed to go up the mountain any more, never!"

It was hard for Vinzi to suppress his newly rising grief.

"You see, Vinzi," Mr. Delrick said kindly,

"your father wants you to be happy. You know that yourself and I can absolutely assure you of it. He said the words you worry about so much because he thinks that your life on the mountain might interfere with your future happiness. Time may bring many changes, and therefore it is possible that he won't have to keep his word. It is entirely wrong, though, for you to keep on repeating these words to yourself, for they only make you sad and take all your spirit away. Did you not find joy and happiness where you expected unhappiness? Remember that, Vinzi, and keep up your courage."

The mother had entered meanwhile and after setting the breakfast on the table had immediately vanished. It had calmed her to hear how Mr. Delrick was speaking to her boy and how attentively the latter was listening.

" Now, Vinzi," said Mr. Delrick rising, " pull yourself together and be glad that you are home again. Show your father a pleasant face when he comes home, and if you are willing to do what he tells you to, everything may still come right. Will you promise me to think about what I have just now said? "

This Vinzi gladly did, and when the mother

entered a little later after Mr. Delrick had gone out, his eyes already were somewhat clearer.

The day went quietly by. All the inmates of the house, feeling that the happiness of the evening before had vanished, could not help being depressed. When the day was over and Vinzenz Lesa had settled as usual on his bench, his forehead lay in deep furrows. Staring at the ground, he even let his pipe go out.

Mr. Delrick now stepped up to him.

"Mr. Lesa," he said, striking a match and offering the light to his host, "you are not in a good humor, or you would not let your pipe go out. Here, light it again."

"Humor, you say, humor!" Lesa repeated grimly. "If one's field is spoilt by hail, one can always hope that it will bring good fruit next year. But when a man's only son goes from bad to worse, no hope is left him. From worse he can only go to worst, and then I suppose he can't go any further."

"As far as I can judge you have a very upright, well-mannered son," said Mr. Delrick deliberately.

"Yes, he is. I don't complain of that," retorted Lesa. "It's something else. What help is

there when everything has been done to make him happy and he does not see it or know what is best for him. He only hankers after childish rubbish! I won't give in till he comes to reason, even if I should have to send him across the ocean. I know of a place, though, which is quite near, where he couldn't find any chance to keep up his foolish fancies."

"I suppose you mean by that your son's passion for music and his desire to devote himself to it. There might be more in it than foolish fancies, though; it might be very serious on his part," said Mr. Delrick.

"Something serious in it!" replied the father in agitation. "It is just play, like any other. I have nothing against it, if young boys sing jolly songs in the evenings. But that is not the way he does. He sits and stares and neither sees nor hears anything, but thinks about his foolish piping. Once I found a whole heap of pipes he had carved. How could that be other than childish rubbish? And the idea of putting your thoughts on such a thing!"

"That shows that there is something serious in it," answered Mr. Delrick. "If it were only play like any other, he would have exchanged it

for something else long ago, the way boys are apt to do. His whole thinking and wishing then would not always go to the same object. His persistence in trying to make a better instrument for himself, shows how great his zeal for the matter really is. I am perfectly convinced that it is not play, but serious work with him."

"Work! the idea of calling that work!"

To express his indignation, Vinzenz Lesa blew unusually thick clouds of smoke from his pipe.

"Music certainly can be work, and where there is real talent, it can be a splendid career," Mr. Delrick continued. "I think you ought to let your son learn an instrument. His longing for it is so great that he would gladly do the heaviest work to have this wish gratified."

Vinzenz Lesa put by his pipe, which was a sure sign of intense excitement.

"Sir," he said with suppressed anger, "Vinzenz Lesa's only son shall not be a musician. He has an estate on which he can live like a gentleman. If he wants to blow a trumpet later on, he can well afford to. But it is quite another matter to take a boy away from a healthy, sound work and bring him up to playing instruments

and making music. He has no sense yet and would probably come to me and say what you have just told me, that he wants to make music his career. No sir, Vinzenz Lesa's son is not going to be a travelling musician."

"All musicians do not necessarily have to be vagabonds," was Mr. Delrick's quick reply. "There are many musicians with glorious gifts who do their work quite differently."

"Yes, and they all come to one's house," continued the excited father, "many hundreds of them. They all make music. The father plays on a broken fiddle and a woman in rags sings with a shrill voice. That's the end of all of them! If you had an only son, sir, would you let him become such a one?"

"Surely not one like that," replied Mr. Delrick. "But if I should happen to have a son with great gifts as a composer, nothing would prevent me from furthering his wishes."

"My boy has not got great gifts," said the father obstinately, "because such great gifts don't happen often. Will you believe me when I say that as soon as Vinzi comes to reason, he'll be glad and grateful that he can live on a beauti-

ful farm and doesn't have to wander about the world as a musician? "

Mr. Delrick had to admit to himself that he really did not know how much talent Vinzi had. All he knew was the boy's great longing. He also felt that Mr. Lesa's opinion about a musician's miserable life could not possibly be changed. He had puzzled how he could be certain on that point. How otherwise would he have the right to fight the father's great disinclination? Maybe he should rather support the father's opinion and help to bring his son to the right path.

" Mr. Lesa," he said, rising and giving his hand to his host, " don't let us talk about it any more today, for we don't seem to come to an understanding, but I mean to take it up again and I hope we shall fully agree with each other then. We have always gotten along so well till now."

" So we have," replied Vinzenz Lesa, shaking the proffered hand. " Whenever we don't agree, I always know that you mean well."

Mr. Delrick now made ready to go. On the next day, the last before his departure, the whole house was as still and quiet as if a misfortune were impending. To the unhappy thoughts of

the inmates was added the grief that the friend who had always been their comfort was to leave them. Stefeli had expected everything to be joyful again as soon as Vinzi returned. Just the opposite had happened, and now the only one who could have helped them was going away.

On the last evening Mr. Delrick told the mother of his conversation with Mr. Lesa and comforted her by the assurance that he had not given up the hope of finding a way out for Vinzi. But she had given up and saw only grief ahead for them all. Even if her husband would give way to the persuasions of Mr. Delrick, he would never be reconciled to the matter and a breach would remain between them. Only one person could have prevented that, and he was the one who had to go.

Vinzi felt that if he could talk sometimes with Mr. Delrick he might regain his joy and confidence. His heart was therefore very heavy at his friend's departure. Mr. Lesa had the full conviction that his wife and son did not understand what was necessary for Vinzi's good. The only person who would probably comprehend it at last and would then bring the others round was departing. Mr. Delrick in spite of speaking

a kindly word to one and an encouraging one to the other was unable to lift their spirits.

In the evening when he had withdrawn to his room, some one knocked on his door and Vinzi entered, carrying two little books and a small package. He asked timidly if Mr. Delrick would take these things to his three cousins. The package he had promised to send to Russli before he left. The books were for Jos and Faz, for the boys had told him that they liked to read on winter evenings. As they possessed so few books, they were obliged to read the same ones over and over again. Vinzi also wished to send his best love to everybody in his uncle's house, as well as to the grandfather and Pater Silvanus. He was anxious to thank them all and let them know how happy he had been with them and how much he wanted . . . . but here Vinzi could speak no further. Quickly saying good-night he went out.

Mr. Delrick had planned to go back from the Italian lakes to Germany by another route. He hoped to return next summer, at which the whole family rejoiced. Stefeli, however, thought that this was too far off. Early next morning he drove away in the direction of the Simplon.

CHAPTER IX

SURPRISES, BUT NOT ONLY FOR RUSSLI

DURING the months of September and October Vinzenz Lesa was always very busy. He usually went about in excellent spirits, as he had good reason to rejoice over the blessings of his harvest. But this fall he was often silent and could be seen standing still, staring in front of him absent-mindedly. Apparently his thoughts were busy with something which worried him. His son's future occupied him day and night and left him no peace, for he loved Vinzi dearly and was as proud of him as only a father can be. Every one was fond of Vinzi, but he wished him to realize his fortunate prospects. Thousands would envy him the smooth, carefree life which lay before him. All he needed was to have his eyes opened.

Vinzenz Lesa, after pondering deeply for a long, long while finally reached a conclusion. One day he entered the living room and found his wife busy mending his old coat. Needless to say,

her thoughts were also busied with the same problem constantly occupying them both.

"I am going to take the boy away on Sunday," he said upon entering. "I'll take him to my brother in Freiburg, who will be only too glad to get Vinzi. There is always lots of work till winter time. Vinzi can't count on many distractions there, so it will be good for him if he has plenty to do."

Mrs. Lesa's work slipped out of her hands. Pale with dread, she gazed at her husband.

"Have you thought about the condition your brother is in, Vinzenz? Do you remember what name they call him by?" she asked, dreadfully frightened. In her mind's eye she saw Vinzi before her, staring in front of him as he was wont to do, and her brother-in-law's pathetic figure right beside him.

"That does not matter," answered her husband. "My brother is not vicious he only hates giving orders. He does not like to work, but his mind is quite clear enough to know that the place needs a master besides a servant. That is why he wants me to come back or send him my boy. Vinzi is not stupid. As soon as he sees that he can give orders, he'll get a liking for it,

which is the first step to knowledge. It is the best way out for him, believe me! I have thought it out and I mean to go on Sunday."

Mrs. Lesa wished to raise other objections, but everything she said seemed only to confirm her husband's statement that he had found the right place for Vinzi, so she remained silent. When her husband had gone and she was left alone with her own thoughts, she remembered her great grief when Vinzi had been sent away before. How differently things had gone with him from what she had feared. She had really been ungrateful to God, for he had brought her lad to kindly people. Why should she begin to worry and doubt again, as if she knew better what was good for Vinzi? She would put everything into His hands, with the confidence that the good Father in Heaven meant well with all His children and would lead hers also to final happiness. This thought calmed her. She decided to talk it all over with Vinzi, who as yet knew nothing of his near departure. She found it better to prepare him by telling him about the farm of his ancestors. Then he would understand that he was sent away because some one was needed on the place.

That evening, when she heard Vinzi coming home, she called him in. He had been out in the woods all day with his father. As the father had work to do in the barn and stable, he would not miss the boy. Stefeli, who ran in at once, was sent off on an errand to the barn in the hope that she would probably remain a considerable time with her old friends in the stable.

But Stefeli had noticed that the mother had something special in mind regarding Vinzi and as she wanted to hear it all, she returned in a twinkling. The mother, however, was not desirous of her presence.

"Go over to the barnyard," she said, "and look for eggs in every nook and corner. You know that the chickens lay them sometimes where one least suspects them. Bring them here afterwards, but be sure to look everywhere."

Stefeli ran as fast as she could go, but she had barely left the house, when she came running back. Flinging open the door, she cried, "He is coming back! He is coming back!"

The next moment she was gone again. The mother and Vinzi looked at each other. The same thought had flashed through their heads,

but it seemed so impossible that they did not dare to mention it.

The door opened again, and what they had thought impossible really had come to pass. Stefeli triumphantly entered at the side of Mr. Delrick, whose hand she was holding. The surprise was so great for Vinzi and Mrs. Lesa that neither could say a word, but pure joy gleamed from their faces.

"I changed my plans," said Mr. Delrick after the first greetings. "My friends are returning to Germany another way, and therefore I had to come back once more. Your relatives up there loaded me with greetings for Vinzi and I am glad to bring them to him myself. If I had gone to Germany another way I could not have done so, and the good people insisted on my delivering them. They treated me as an old friend because I brought them Vinzi's greetings."

Vinzi's eyes gleamed with pleasure and the bliss of remembrance.

"Did you see them all? The grandfather and Pater Silvanus, too?" he asked expectantly.

"Yes, everybody, and they all seem to love you, Vinzi," replied Mr. Delrick. "Your good

uncle Lorenz and his wife could not tell me enough about your happy times together."

Mr. Delrick also described how pleased the three boys had been with their gifts. They sent their warmest thanks. Russli did not let his present leave his hands, wherever he walked or stood, he held on to the red silk bag, filled with fine agate marbles. He had sent a special message for Vinzi, which Mr. Delrick had not quite understood, but hoped Vinzi could make out. Russli wanted Vinzi to know that he would never in his life tickle them any more. He had never thought a surprise could be so lovely.

At that moment the father entered. In surprise over his guest he stood stock-still for a moment. Mr. Delrick had risen to greet him.

"Oh, I am glad it's true," said Lesa with joyful eyes, shaking the proffered hand heartily. "I always thought this would happen somehow. It has been so empty here since you left. Welcome again to our house!" he added, strengthening this sentiment with a renewed shaking of the hand. "Let us sit down to supper now; my wife is sure to have something special for you. She couldn't be less happy than I am at your coming."

Mrs. Lesa had already disappeared to pre-

pare supper. The meal passed most pleasantly, as the joy of seeing Mr. Delrick again had driven away all gloomy thoughts.

When every one rose from the table, Mr. Delrick said, "I'd like to have a little talk with you, out on the bench, the way we used to do; but don't forget your pipe."

"Never," replied Vinzenz Lesa.

Mrs. Lesa understood that Mr. Delrick desired to speak to her husband alone, so she kept the children with her indoors.

As soon as the men were seated on the bench, Mr. Delrick began: "I suppose, Mr. Lesa, you have guessed that I had a reason for coming back and changing my plans."

"You do nothing without a good reason," replied the other thoughtfully.

"I must tell you something which is so important that I wanted to lose no time," continued Mr. Delrick. "I had planned to spend a day on the mountain to give Vinzi's messages in person and to look up his friends there. First, I called on your worthy cousin, Mr. Lorenz Lesa and his wife. These good people could not speak enough about Vinzi. They miss him so much, for he made life exceedingly pleasant for old and young

with his songs and music. I suppose a father likes to hear that?"

The latter nodded.

"Then I visited the old grandfather in the tower, who was greatly touched by Vinzi's message. He said that Vinzi had given him the most beautiful hours he had had for years—the times your boy had trained the chorus to sing to the old man. It is the grandfather's dearest wish to have the boy play for him when he is taking his last journey. I think that this must have been more than a light little song, for it could not otherwise have made such a deep impression on the grandfather. What do you think Mr. Lesa?"

Vinzenz Lesa silently nodded again.

"When I asked the grandfather if Pater Silvanus knew anything about music, he grew quite talkative. He told me that Pater Silvanus had been a very fine musician and had spent many years in a college in Rome. He had sought out the solitude on the mountain voluntarily and had lived there many years, doing good. I found him just the man I was looking for," Mr. Delrick went on, "a man who could give me an opinion on Vinzi's talent. So of course I went to see the

monk. As soon as he heard that I came from Vinzi, he was very friendly and immediately asked me what the boy was doing with his music. Then I told him that I had come especially to find out what he thought of Vinzi's gift. The good monk grew enthusiastic. 'You ask me if he has talent,' he exclaimed. 'The boy is simply full of music. When I studied with him I never had the feeling of teaching him anything. It was more like drawing everything out of him.' In order that I could judge he told me that the first melody Vinzi had composed and had worked out by himself was so original and lovely that he himself often played it. Vinzi had also composed a tune to some words, and this had simply won every one's heart. The cow-herds on the pastures as well as the girls at their spinning-wheels would often sing it. The young lads whistled it in the barns and stables, and people all about hummed it and called it 'Our song.' No one quite remembered where it had come from, and it had grown to be the favorite property of the whole mountain-side. I don't doubt the boy's talent any longer, Mr. Lesa, and I hope you also are convinced that it is worth while to open the way

for such a gift and develop it. I am sure you mean to do so, Mr. Lesa."

For a while the farmer deeply pondered, blowing clouds of smoke into the air. Then he said thoughtfully: "And what then? To develop it will mean to teach the boy to make music till he won't want to do anything else. But Vinzenz Lesa wants no musician for a son. They are a shiftless crowd, and Vinzi has a good home. If he once begins to wander about, he won't ever be able to settle down and that will be his ruin. How can you expect me, who realizes all this, to start him on it? No, sir, you can't expect this!"

At this unexpected reply Mr. Delrick remained silent. A considerable time passed till he said calmly after ripe consideration. "Apparently I can't get you beyond the idea of his becoming a travelling musician. But let me make you a proposition. I hope you still have some confidence in me?"

"I have," the other replied firmly.

"Good. Then I'll propose that you should let me have your boy for a year or longer. I'll do for him what I would do for my own son. If he comes back and you still think as you do today, a year among strangers will not have harmed

him. If he is to spend the rest of his life here on the farm, it won't be bad if he has learned something. That never has hurt anybody yet."

Lesa, after considering, suddenly came to a determination. "That can't be, sir," he said decisively.

Mr. Delrick asked the reason for this sudden statement.

"I can't possibly send my son into your house for a whole year when you have paid me more for just a few weeks than was necessary," Vinzenz Lesa explained.

Mr. Delrick smiled. "I live alone in a large old house, which is very still and empty. Having the boy with me will make a most welcome change, as you can see for yourself. He will bring new life into my existence. But if you are not yet satisfied, I promise to come to you as guest as often as I want to and till we are absolutely even. You know how much I like it here. Please let us settle it, Mr. Lesa. I can only hope you will never regret it."

Vinzenz Lesa could not help thinking to himself that a year among strangers would benefit Vinzi greatly. After all, the boy had seen very little of other people's lives. He would meet

boys of his own age struggling for their existence and that might teach him to be grateful for his own good fortune. To be taken to the paved streets of a city from his free life in the country might even make him homesick and anxious to come back before the year was out. The father would not ask for more.

"I'll agree," said Vinzenz Lesa firmly, pressing the proffered hand to conclude the bargain. "I only want to say one more word. If Vinzi should wish to come home sooner than we have settled, you must let him come."

Mr. Delrick willingly promised. Then he rose in order to communicate the husband's new plan to the anxious mother, while his companion took his accustomed evening trip through the barn and stable. Mrs. Lesa could find no words to express her gratitude and joy over this new turn events had taken. Now Vinzi was saved from staying with his dreadful uncle, and how wonderful was the way by which he had been spared! Even if she did not quite know what Mr. Delrick meant to do with Vinzi, she was overjoyed at the prospect that her boy was to spend a whole year with such a man. Vinzi likewise knew no more about his immediate future,

but looked forward to everything with joyful confidence. Mr. Delrick had told him that Pater Silvanus' wishes in regard to him were to be carried out. This meant that he was going to be happy.

Three days later came another day of parting No one was sad this time, because each had some consolation. Only Stefeli rebelled a little, for it seemed to the poor child that no one on earth was compelled to be as lonely as she was.

In the winter which followed, Stefeli had to take many a solitary walk. She had no companion on her way to school and got very weary going alone twice daily to and fro. As she was of a most sociable disposition, this occasioned her many a bitter sigh

From time to time Mr. Delrick sent news about Vinzi. Mrs. Lesa read the letters aloud to her husband and the reports were always good. Vinzi was well and busy with his studies. The boy sent hearty greetings to his family, and the missive always concluded with kind words from Mr. Delrick. He spoke of his great joy in having the boy with him and watching his rapid development

When the father had breathlessly listened to

these reports about his son's welfare, he often showed some disappointment. He always seemed to be waiting for some message which did not come. " Is that all? " he would ask when his wife had finished.

After she had assured him that she had read every word he silently went away. His wife had guessed long ago that he waited for something which did not happen. She felt that he would have been more pleased if Vinzi were less happy and showed some inclination to come home.

This caused new anxieties in her heart and she wondered what would happen when Vinzi returned. If he did according to his father's wishes, he would never be satisfied. And if his father let him do the work the boy had chosen, a breach would remain between the two, for the father would never be reconciled to the thought that his son would become a strolling musician. She remembered the unspeakable joy of her husband when their son was born. He had indefatigably worked for the little one and nothing had ever been too good for him. When he looked at his son, he was glad to be able to say, " He can have everything he wants some day." A great pity for her husband surged up in her at these thoughts

and she felt as if she must call Vinzi home. But the next moment she had to think again, "But then poor Vinzi will feel unhappy."

In her agitation she was glad that she had nothing whatever to decide in the matter, but the greatest consolation of all was the knowledge that One above her, Who saw further and knew everything would decide the final outcome for them all.

CHAPTER X

OLD FRIENDS AND NEW LIFE

SPRING was here again and all the trees and hedges were in bloom. Stefeli could not gaze her fill at the fresh green grass, as she wandered through the meadows with her school-bag on her back. The golden buttercups were gleaming here and there among the grasses, and red daisies were nodding merrily in the breeze.

Stefeli was coming home from her last day of school for that season. How lovely that day had been a year ago when she had walked home with Vinzi and they had discussed the joys of the coming holidays. The whole summer had lain before them with the delightful prospect of many perfect days on the pasture. They would sit again under the ash tree as long as they pleased, or look for berries on the bushes. Then they would have to chase Schwärzeli and be altogether as free as the birds that whistled in the trees above them. But what would the coming summer be like? Stefeli only saw before her many hot

days to be spent in the room with her hateful knitting. She would probably not be able to spend one of them on the pasture, and at this thought she sat down on the edge of the meadow and sighed aloud.

But Stefeli could never remain unhappy very long. Suddenly remembering that the wild strawberries behind the barn had been nearly ripe two days ago, she felt the need to inspect them. Quickly jumping up, she ran towards the house first, in order to rid herself of her heavy load of books. But hurriedly flinging open the door of the living room, she stood stock-still upon the threshold, dumb with astonishment.

An unknown man sat opposite her mother confidentially talking to her, and beside him was a boy of Vinzi's age who took a lively part in the conversation. The mother was wearing a happier face than she had shown for a long while, and every few moments Vinzi's name was mentioned between them.

" I suppose this is your little daughter," said the man, glancing towards the door. " Come here, Stefeli, I am no stranger. I am your Uncle Lorenz, and this is Jos, a good friend of Vinzi's."

Stefeli came joyfully up to greet the two

whom Vinzi had loved so dearly. They seemed very welcome just at this time when she had felt so especially lonely. She shook Uncle Lorenz's hand trustfully, for he gazed at her with such friendly eyes. It also made her happy to look at Jos, constantly smiling at her, as if he wished to say, "We'll get along well together."

Stefeli turned towards her uncle and said casually, "Isn't Jos going to stay with us all summer? You know Vinzi stayed with you just as long as that."

The uncle laughed.

"I call it a real welcome to be expected to stay all summer. But we'll have to talk with your father and see what he says. Why don't you take Jos out with you a little and see how you get along together?"

This did not have to be urged. Stefeli, taking her cousin's hand, drew him happily after her. He must see everything in the stable and the barn, the garden and the chicken-yard; it was just as if Vinzi were home again and could share all her delights.

Meanwhile Vinzenz Lesa had returned from his work and upon entering the room had greeted his guest with a surprise and visible joy. In the

state of deepening depression under which he was laboring, his contented-looking cousin Lorenz was a welcome sight. "We so much missed hearing from you," said the latter after the first greetings, "that my wife kept teasing me about your Vinzi. She feared we might not see him all summer and we wanted to be sure to have him up again for the season. I want him no less than she does, for we miss him ever so much. We thought we'd bring you our Jos for a while, as we agreed to do, and then the two boys could come up to us together till winter time. But your wife has just told me that Vinzi has gone away. I am mighty sorry not to see him, I must say, and my wife will be bitterly disappointed if he does not come. You have no idea how much she thinks of Vinzi; but he deserves it."

The parents were glad to hear their cousin's words about Vinzi, but remained silent. Whenever the boy's name was mentioned, the furrows on Vinzenz Lesa's brow always deepened, showing clearly that it touched his sorest spot. His wife therefore mentioned Vinzi as little as she could.

Considerate little Stefeli by that time had felt that it was high time for Jos to get something to

eat. She therefore came back and entered the room hand in hand with him. The two seemed to be old friends already.

Jos went straight up to his uncle Vinzenz to greet him. The latter looked at the open face of the boy with a mixture of pain and delight. Health, strength and the sheer joy of living laughed from the lad's eyes.

"He'll be as big as you some day, Lorenz," said Vinzenz, after having measured Jos from top to toe. "He must be a real help already."

"So he is, I can tell you!" replied Lorenz, pleased that his cousin should find it worth while to examine his boy thoroughly.

Mrs. Lesa, who had disappeared, now opened the door and gave Stefeli a sign. The child immediately began to set the table, taking great care not to forget anything.

"Your wife has a good little helper, too," said Cousin Lorenz, watching Stefeli's quick preparations with great approval. "My wife would like to have her, too. You must send her up to us some day, but I can't guarantee that you'll ever get her back."

The mother now came in and set on the table the best her kitchen and cellar could provide. It

was a special delight to her to entertain these guests who had shown Vinzi so much kindness.

"I hope you are going to stay with us a few days, cousin," she said as she settled down opposite to him. She kept a vigilant eye on his and the boy's plates and constantly supplied them with fresh rosy ham and gold-green salad leaves from her garden. "Won't you leave Jos here with us for a few weeks, cousin?" she asked.

But Stefeli here pulled violently at her mother's apron and whispered, "Say for the summer, mother, quickly, before he says yes," for she was terribly afraid that the proposal might be accepted and then could not be changed.

"Yes, I will, cousin, and I must say you don't make it hard for one to stay," replied the cousin. "I came purposely on Saturday so I could have a nice Sunday with you tomorrow. I'll gladly stay if it suits you, but I'll have to leave on Monday. Vinzenz shall settle what is to be done about my boy."

"There is plenty of time," replied the latter leisurely. "We'll take a walk across the fields tomorrow. I suppose you count on looking about you here, and that will give us a good chance to talk."

"Look at the cow-stable before everything else," cried Jos enthusiastically, who had been silent till then out of deep respect for his uncle. But the impression he had received in the stable was too powerful for him to be restrained. "I am sure there are no finer cows anywhere than in uncle's stable. They look as clean as if they had just been watered."

"I thought you would like them," said his father, "and I must see them today. Do you still have your breed from Freiburg, Vinzenz?"

"Why not?" retorted the other. "I don't change a thing if it's good. Your boy seems to have eyes in his head."

As soon as they had risen from the table, the men began their stroll through the stable and barn. Jos and Stefeli joyfully realized their chance to take another walk, for there were still many things for Jos to see.

Early next afternoon the two men wandered through the blooming fields and meadows of Lesa's property. Mrs. Lesa was taking the children to the sunny slope where the first strawberries were ripening, for she knew that that would please them both. She had planned this separation, as the men had many affairs to talk

over. Busy with observations of the blooming trees, the luscious grass and the fields which promised a plenteous harvest, they had reached the slope where Lesa's fine forest ground began.

Before they started up the forest path, shaded by beautiful beech trees, Lorenz stood still a moment, gazing down at the dwelling-house which looked up so invitingly from the high walnut trees surrounding it.

"Vinzenz, you are a lucky man," he said at last. "Joy and peace in your house and everything about you in such fine shape that no one could wish for anything better. And all this is your own property."

"Yes, and another place in Freiburg with twice as many cows as here and grass enough to fill the barn to the top."

The furrow in Vinzenz Lesa's brow grew deeper while he spoke as if worse things yet were coming.

"I get twelve cheeses a year from the milk."

"I see no reason for you to despair, Vinzenz," said the other with laughing eyes. "I never knew that the other place belonged to you as well. So you have two fine properties. Well, I can't help wondering about you. Our Lord has

heaped you with blessings, and you show a face as if you had nothing but storms to battle."

"It is easy for you to talk," said Vinzenz grimly. "You have three fine, strong boys, fit for work. But look at me! After all the work I have done here, I shall have to see it go to pieces. I can't be in two places at once, and my son won't open his eyes and see the fine life that lies before him. Hundreds might envy him. When I inherited this place, I left my father's home, where every tree seemed like a comrade and every piece of livestock had grown up under my very eyes. You can believe me that I hated to go. But you have no idea how run down and neglected this place was, and I knew that no stranger would undertake to look after it. I said to myself that I would do it for my boy; in a few years he would be old enough to manage it himself and then I could go home again. I even brought the property up more quickly than I expected to. Don't you yourself say that it looks like a blooming garden from one end to the other? Shall I let it run down again or shall I let my other place go to such ruin that one can't recognize it any longer? Tell me what you think? Don't you think I have good cause to worry, and

do you wonder I don't sing and whistle? You can see now how I stand!"

"It is not half so bad as you think," retorted Lorenz with a cheerful face. "You have a boy who is sure to amount to something fine one day. But you don't only have a boy, you have a daughter besides, who is sure to bring you nothing but pleasure. Let six or seven years pass. You are an active man and can easily keep up both estates till then. By that time you can give over this place here to your girl. She'll know how to look after it, and you can go back home once more. I shouldn't wonder if somebody would turn up by then who would gladly share the work and responsibility with her. Your place will be in good hands then."

Lorenz was walking on but stopped once more.

"I nearly forgot to ask you the most important question," he said. "What do you want to do with Jos? Do you wish to keep him, or would you rather be left by yourself? He is not slow to learn."

"I can see that," remarked Vinzenz. "You'll probably miss him, and I feel in your

debt already, for Vinzi was no help to you in anything."

Lorenz eagerly remonstrated. Vinzenz should just hear his wife on the subject and she would tell him something else. She herself had suggested bringing Jos to them. She had never wanted any of her boys to go away, but since Vinzi had been with them, she thought that Jos would learn only good things in such a household. She also maintained that gratitude had to be shown for leaving Vinzi with them so long, besides having the hope that Vinzi might return if Jos stayed with them for a while and was able to serve them likewise.

"Tell me frankly," concluded the cousin, "have you another reason for hesitating in keeping Jos?"

"That is my only reason," was the firm reply.

"Then Jos shall stay here and you can send him home any time it suits you."

Lorenz quickened his pace now, for he wished to have plenty of leisure left to talk with cousin Stefane and her little daughter. He already felt bound to them in great friendship.

When the evening was over, he wanted to say good-bye to Stefeli for he had to leave early the

next morning, when she would be sound asleep. But Stefeli, giving her hand, refused to do so, and in the morning, long before sunrise, she stood under the door and looked at her uncle with laughing eyes. She had grown so fond of this friendly man that she did not mind getting up so early; she had firmly made up her mind to see him off.

But Stefeli also had another plan. As soon as her uncle was downstairs she said casually, "Can Jos stay here now? Can he stay all summer till fall?"

"Yes, yes," smilingly replied the uncle, "till your father sends him away."

The mother had prepared steaming coffee to strengthen her relative on his homeward journey. Jos had got up even before Stefeli and could be heard outside with the father. The boy had seen the stable door open and had run in to examine his uncle's beautiful cows, one after the other. Vinzenz seemed well pleased with this early visit. The boy uttered one cry of admiration after another, as well as suitable observations about the different animals. For a time the farmer watched the boy as he went from stall to stall and looked at all the cows. But when Jos was so lost in the

contemplation of the tidy stable and its inhabitants that he had forgotten everything else, the uncle said:

"I think we had better go to the house before your father leaves. He might escape us otherwise."

"Dear me, I never thought of that!" exclaimed Jos, and bounded away like an arrow.

After many hearty shakings of the hand the uncle started on his way. Vinzenz wished to accompany him to the borders of his property, and the others went as far as the garden hedge.

When the men had disappeared, Stefeli asked quickly, "Jos, wouldn't you like to go to the pasture? Then I could, too, if you want me to."

"Certainly. But you can't ask me what I want," replied Jos, "because I am not master here."

"Oh, I wish one could be master for once," sighed Stefeli.

The father soon returned, and as the mother had found several things to attend to in the vegetable garden, he met all three outside. He went up to Jos, while Stefeli stood with round expectant eyes behind the boy.

"It seems to me you find real pleasure in the

cows, Jos. Are you willing to take charge of them and take them to the pasture?" asked the father. "You are your own master then all day. I'll leave you in absolute charge of them, for you know what there is to do. The child can go with you and can help in case of need. She knows all the roads hereabouts and also a good deal about her business. Does that suit you?"

"Oh, yes, I'd like to do that best of all," cried Jos, while Stefeli leaped for joy. Then she raced into the house after her mother, as preparations for the day must be made at once. The father meanwhile went to the stable with Jos, as it was time to start.

Stefeli had never pictured to herself how wonderful it would be to be outside again and to chase her old friends and then cool off again under the shady ash tree. Jos's great joy in everything he saw and experienced would have carried Stefeli along, even if she had not been filled with happiness and joy herself. All her old acquaintances were there again, besides four gorgeous new red and white spotted cows, which her father had fetched from Freiburg. Another young Schwärzeli was there, too, which galloped just as merrily from one side of the pasture to the

other as Stefeli's other favorite had done, and often jumped over fences and bridges if they did not catch her in time. Stefeli remembered all their characteristics and told Jos about them. They would get to know the four new ones before very long.

Jos grasped things eagerly and always retained his knowledge. It seemed miraculous to Stefeli how he could outguess a cow when she wanted to run off. Then he caressed and calmed her. He caught Schwärzeli by the tail while giving her first bound, before she started flying off across the pasture like the wind. It was exactly as if he could tell by looking at them just when they wanted to escape. Not much running had to be done, therefore, and Jos always said to the child, "Just stay under the tree, Stefeli, I can manage them quite well alone."

And he was right. He had learned to understand the new cows so quickly that they made large astonished eyes when their plans to run away were always frustrated from the start.

Beside his duties Jos found plenty of time frequently to leap up for joy. Often he sang and yodelled so loudly that it re-echoed from all the hills. His voice was so fine and melodious

that Stefeli was charmed by it and would beg over and over, "Sing again, Jos, sing it for me again." The morning always passed so quickly that the two looked at each other questioningly when they heard the sounds of the noonday bell from far away. It seemed hardly possible that so many hours had already passed.

Stefeli always spread out their lunch under the ash tree in the good old way. After a searching glance at the cows, who had quietly settled down about them in the sunshine, Jos sat down willingly by Stefeli. He first of all admired the neatly spread repast before him, for he had never seen a meal set out so perfectly outdoors. The swaying branches above gave them the needed shade.

"I am sure no one else could spread a table as well as you can, Stefeli," he said, full of admiration. Then he began to eat everything Stefeli offered him with the heartiest appetite.

The afternoon passed as quickly as the morning, and when they were strolling homewards in the bright evening light, Stefeli said, "Oh, it was lovely today. I hope all the other days will be exactly like it."

"I hope so, too," repeated Jos.

Vinzenz Lesa stood at his barn and watched his herd coming home. Jos was running alongside of the cows, first on one side and then on the other. This kept them walking in a neat row, instead of running first here, then there.

"A quick, orderly boy," said Vinzenz Lesa to himself, as he slowly met the procession on its way to the stable.

A series of perfect days followed, and the children had the happiest times. Stefeli's wish seemed to be fulfilled, for she fairly beamed with joy and well-being all day long, and Jos sang and yodelled louder every day from sheer happiness.

"It's just as if Vinzi were back since Jos is with us. Don't you think so, mother?" said Stefeli, coming home one day with cheeks flushed, partly from delight and partly from the bright light of the setting sun. Jos as usual had stayed outside with his uncle.

"Yes," replied the mother. "As long as we can't have Vinzi, I am glad Jos takes his place. I like Jos as much as if he belonged to us."

"I, too," said Stefeli without hesitation. "But there are three times when I had a better time with Vinzi. In the morning, in the evening,

and on rainy days. It was much nicer then when Vinzi was at home."

The mother well understood what Stefeli alluded to, but she asked the child to let Jos go on his way, as he was doing his duty and it would be wrong of her to hinder him in that.

"I have tried already, but it does no good." said Stefeli frankly.

She was forbidden to do so again. The mother was only too glad and grateful to see how Jos occupied himself at those times, even if Stefeli was displeased. He did so of his own free will, and she had noticed that it had actually improved her husband's temper.

Jos was always the first up in the morning, and if the stable, which was his favorite resort, was still closed, he thought of something which had to be set in order in the barn. In this way Vinzenz would find him busy with hammering or mending something. The boy always came to breakfast at the very last minute when the coffee was put upon the table. He didn't even notice how impatiently Stefeli was waiting for him. In the evening after their return Jos could not be lured away from his cows till the last one had

returned from watering and was comfortably bedded on the straw.

The mother had always set the steaming pot on the table before he came in. Stefeli never could count on running over to the wild strawberry bed with Jos, therefore.

On rainy days Jos always disappeared entirely. He knew in the early morning what work had to be done that day in the fields, the hills, the woods or on the trees. When it rained, he would quickly ask his uncle, " Can I go with the man today? "

The other always agreed, "Why not, if you don't mind the rain? "

Rain didn't bother Jos at all. Everything that grew and brought in fruit interested him so much that he wanted to see it and have a hand in it if possible. Best of all, he liked it when the wood which had been felled had to be brought home from the forest. Then the horse was hitched to a large lumber wagon and Jos sat on the high seat beside the hired man. As soon as they had left the house behind them the man would say, " There, take them if you want to drive." Giving Jos the reins, he stretched out full length in the wagon to sleep a little longer.

Jos knew the horse well and the horse knew him, so the matter went very smoothly. Jos had already helped in every kind of farm work and knew exactly when things were in order or when something was amiss. He took hold of everything with such spirit and eagerness that he acquired an instinct for what was needed when matters went wrong.

In the beginning Vinzenz Lesa had said to his wife in a bitter tone, "Just look how he enjoys everything! He works with such an eagerness, as if it were his own. Look at the pleasure he finds in it all! And my own boy, for whom we work, has never even seen it."

But everything had turned out to make Mrs. Lesa happy. Her husband spoke every day in a different tone about Jos. He could say quite cheerfully now: "The boy has four eyes in his head. He discovers what I overlook myself and the man would never have seen. He actually sees everything. I can entirely depend on him as on no one else, and he is so handy that it is a pleasure to see him work."

Mrs. Lesa saw her husband's growing delight in their young nephew with hearty feelings of gratitude. He was in a much better humor than

he had been for years. When during the afternoon she was sitting quietly and undisturbed in her room, her thoughts unerringly dwelt upon Vinzi and she pondered about his future. She wondered if he would return after a year and take up the life his father wished him to, in which case he would never be really happy. Or if he had definitely chosen a new path for himself, which would forever estrange him from his father. She lost herself in imaginary conversations with her son, and the slightest noise made her start up, as she would think that her boy might have suddenly returned.

So it happened one day when her thoughts had been busy with Vinzi that the housedoor was opened and the noise of several footsteps neared the room. Mrs. Lesa had jumped up and running to the door had quickly opened it.

"Old friends, who are looking for shelter in your house," said a vigorous man's voice.

That same instant a slight hand grasped hers, then another. Only then could she really see them.

"Welcome! Welcome, Alida, Hugo! Welcome, Mr. Thornau!" she cried, heartily delighted. "Are you staying in our parts again?"

"Not exactly, but we are here for the

present," said Mr. Thornau, returning her friendly handshake. "We'll stay here, if you will receive us. But if you say no, we'll have to wander home again. Before everything else, I must tell you that I am bringing you two children who have lost their mother. They have asked me to come here, for nowhere else will suit them."

Mrs. Lesa was won over already. "The poor children," she said to herself, "and the poor father," she added. Then she turned to the latter.

"Mr. Thornau," she said, "won't you stay here till evening when my husband comes home? Then we can talk it over."

"And what does his wife say?" asked Mr. Thornau.

"Oh, she would love to take their mother's place for a time, if she could," replied Mrs. Lesa.

"I am glad!" he exclaimed with satisfaction.

He was willing to wait for Mr. Lesa and settled meanwhile under the shady walnut trees with his children.

Vinzenz Lesa looked with surprise at the guests he found waiting before his house. But there was not much time for wondering, because Mr. Thornau had gone up to him and eloquently

informed him of the reason for this visit. He was sure Mr. Lesa would not shut his door against him and especially his children, who had declared that they would not spend their summer anywhere in the world except at Mr. Lesa's residence. He had come with the firm hope that Mr. Lesa would not turn them away and begged him not to propose a house in the neighborhood they already knew, as the children simply would not go back there. He had no intention, either, of forcing them to it. It meant either Mr. Lesa's house or going home again. As it was impossible for him to stay with the children just then, he could not leave them anywhere else alone.

Vinzenz Lesa was not displeased at hearing the gentleman's words—either his house or none. But still, one could not tell what these children might bring into his home, for he hardly knew the people.

After reflecting a while he answered, "It falls to my wife; looking after children is her affair."

This suited him best. If his wife wanted to keep them, as he suspected already, it would be his wife's concern. If they got into mischief, she

would have to look out for them, for she had taken them in.

"With pleasure," replied Mr. Thornau. Quickly turning to Mrs. Lesa he said, "Everything is settled, I suppose, for I think you have already said yes in your heart." Mrs. Lesa heartily shook Mr. Thornau's hand, for he had been right. She had long ago decided to keep the motherless children and show them all the affection she was capable of.

Mr. Thornau was anxious to take immediate leave, as he had planned to journey on as soon as he knew his children were in good hands. Then Mrs. Lesa consulted him about their life, what their occupations and pleasures were to be. Her own children had always led the most simple life, she told him. Mr. Thornau wished for nothing better than to give them the life hers were leading. To be up on the pasture from morning till evening would be the best for them he could hope for. The rest of the time Mrs. Lesa could judge for herself.

To his great disappointment Alida's music lessons had been given up. He had always enjoyed her playing. His chief wish was to see

them both come back to him sunburnt and with blooming cheeks, just as her own lad looked.

Taking Mrs. Lesa a little apart, pointing to his sad-looking, pale boy, he added, " I am sure I won't have to specially recommend him to your care. Just look at him! He never was very strong or happy, and since he has lost his mother he is worse than ever. No life, no spirits, no interest in anything! The doctor actually insisted on my sending him away."

Mr. Thornau quickly took farewell till the autumn, when he planned to see them all.

Just then Jos and Stefeli, merrily chatting, came home with the cows. Jos disappeared in the stable as usual and Stefeli slowly approached the house. There was no hurry, for her mother was busy in the kitchen and Jos would not come back yet for at least an hour.

Suddenly her slow steps turned into great leaps, for at the strawberry hedge she had discovered two figures. Could it really be true? And yet it was! With a cry of joy Stefeli ran over to Alida and Hugo. Alida also greeted Stefeli with loud, continued expressions of delight.

"But where is Vinzi?" asked Alida when the greetings were over.

Stefeli told her how long he had been away and that no one knew when he would come back.

Alida looked extremely disappointed, but Stefeli always had a consolation ready.

"I am sure he'll come home while you are here. Jos is here, too, and you'll be sure to like him. Will you stay all summer long?"

Alida assented. "And we are to spend our days on the pasture, because papa wants us to," she added, "but it is a shame Vinzi won't be with us."

Stefeli answered Alida that it was never dull up on the pasture. Her father had prophesied a long stretch of good weather, and that meant that they would be out of doors all day.

Mr. Lesa had been right. The merry little group could wander up day after day to the sunny pasture, and Mrs. Lesa saw to it that a really nourishing meal was always taken along. Alida was in perfect raptures over this free life, hitherto unknown to her. What a blissful beginning of the day to start off in the early morning, when she was usually lying asleep in bed behind her heavy curtains! How delicious

the pure air was! All the birds in the trees sang and whistled so that it sounded like a loud chorus of joy to God.

The two girls would start out together on little trips to explore the interesting places on the large, wide pasture. Sometimes they would seek berries or flowers; another time they went to the old wall where the shining lizards sunned themselves, or listened attentively when the children began to sing. Stefeli knew that if they were silent or made the least movement, the little green creatures would quickly slip away. Alida found it an especial treat to be able to sit down anywhere on the sun-dried ground. She had not experienced this before and it gave her constant pleasure. Stefeli was always ready to settle down beside her, and everything furnished them with subjects for lively conversation.

On the first morning, when Stefeli had promised to waken Alida early, both girls stood fresh and full of enterprise before the barn, waiting for Jos. He had to loosen the cows from their chains before driving them out. Hugo had come down from his room, because his father had wished him to go along to the pasture.

He looked so frail and tired that it hurt Mrs.

Lesa to look at him. She led him affectionately back to his room, and fixing the cushions on his bed, told him to rest a little longer. There was no hurry for him to go, for a little later on she would take him up and show him the way herself. He would never have to start quite so early, if he did not want to.

For the first time since he had lost his mother, Hugo felt himself sheltered again by a mother's affectionate care. From that day on a great love for her began to fill his heart. She watched over him like a mother and saw to it that everything was done for him that might do him good. In these first days the quiet boy, who was still bearing a great sorrow in his heart, spent many hours alone in Mrs. Lesa's company. He found great consolation in it and learned to feel such confidence in her that he began to talk about his mother. She listened with such sympathy that they always returned to that subject when he was with her.

The comfort the boy found in her warm interest was soon apparent. One day Hugo came down quite early into the gleaming sunshine. He had never done it since that first day when he had looked so pale and tired. He

already seemed much stronger and to Mrs. Lesa's joy wished to go right up to the pasture. Till then he had preferred to sit in the house till she sent him out and accompanied him part way.

Hugo found Jos alone on the pasture, singing and whistling while he strolled about among the cows. Alida and Stefeli had gone on a little trip of discovery. It seemed as if Hugo saw the beautiful creatures who were grazing here and there, looking about them, for the first time in his life. He began to ask Jos many questions, for after watching them carefully he had noticed how much they differed in their looks as well as in their ways. He had always thought that cows were just cows, one like another. Jos was in his element now and grew talkative, drawing Hugo's attention to all the animals' habits. The subject proved so contagious that Hugo conceived a keen interest in them and wanted to hear all about them. He only had to ask to be told what he wished to know. Jos could describe them with such keen vividness that Hugo grew most eager to share Jos's knowledge and to find pleasure in it. He soon knew what fodder was the best for milk, which was made first into butter and then into cheese, and how the milk had

to be handled for that purpose. He also learned that the Alpine herdsmen preferred Vinzenz Lesa's milk to any other because his cows were of the best stock and were so immaculately kept.

The two were still talking eagerly when to their great astonishment Stefeli came running toward them and spread out their mid-day meal under the swaying ash tree. They had been so lost in their conversation that they had not noticed how the time had flown. This had suited Stefeli, too, because she had come back rather late from her expedition. Alida also appeared and in the best of humor as the four sat down to lunch. All of them felt especially merry, because Hugo had never been so lively and gay.

"We'll pretend we are a family," suggested Alida, "and we must always stay the same. Hugo is the proprietor of an estate and I am his sister, the unmarried lady of the mansion. Jos is our manager."

"Then Stefeli can be the mistress," was Hugo's proposition.

"But Hugo, she couldn't be," Jos cried out. "Stefeli cooks for us and sets the table. She couldn't be the gentleman's wife, she must be my wife."

"Jos is right," decided Alida, "we'll have it that way, then."

"You see the owner has a mother; that's much better than a wife," said Hugo. "When Mrs. Lesa visits us some day, you'll have to receive her as my mother and prepare a great feast for her."

This thought met great approval, and they began to plan immediately for this feast. Alida invented such astonishing plans for the celebration with torches and rockets that Jos said, "Then our cows will all jump over the hedges from fright and the people at the feast will have to climb after them in their festive jackets."

All four burst into loud laughter at this picture, which brought a sudden end to these extravagant plans. Their meal was ended and they settled here and there in the shadows of the broad branches. Soon all four were sound asleep, fanned by the leafy bows above them. They slept as well as if they had been lying on regal couches. On Hugo's pale cheeks the air and sunshine, gently caressing him, roused a faint rosy color.

Talking merrily, the whole company afterward came wandering down from the pasture,

aglow from the golden light of the setting sun. As usual Jos went to the stable and Hugo disappeared with him.

"Oh, dear, now he begins it, too," said Stefeli. "I only wonder what he wants to do there still."

"Just let him go," remarked Alida, "I am glad of it. He is much happier when he is with Jos. I have noticed that today."

CHAPTER XI

THE OLD SONG ONCE MORE

AUTUMN was here. In Lesa's household it had come much too soon for every one, and the children could not believe that their days on the pasture were nearly over. Hugo and Alida would soon have to go right into the heart of a large city far away. Jos would go home to his mountain, while poor Stefeli would be left behind, unhappy and alone.

"I don't want to be always alone," said Stefeli determinedly, when they had discussed their prospects on one of their last days together. "I'll send a letter to Uncle Lorenz. You know he promised me something."

"I suppose Vinzi will soon come back," said Alida, "and he'll be wonderful company for you. We would have had lots more fun if he had been with us this summer. There were so many things I wanted to talk to him about, things none of you could understand."

The same day Vinzenz Lesa said to his wife, "I hope Lorenz won't come yet to fetch Jos

home. It has been such a good year that we still have our hands full. Things have to be done on every side and I can't do them without the boy. He has the best memory and such good ideas; common sense, besides, enough for three, and a love and interest in the work as if it were all for himself, instead of for us. He just wants to keep the farm in good shape. I would give half the place to have such a son. It would mean so much to me."

"Let's be glad he is still with us," replied the wife, "and I think he'll stay yet for a while. Good Cousin Lorenz hasn't even warned us yet."

Mr. Delrick sent word from time to time, and a letter had come rather lately with the usual good news. Vinzi was well and everything going smoothly. Mr. Delrick seemed to be in no hurry for Vinzi's return, though the year of his absence was practically over.

A few days later when the children walked into the room one night a large letter lay on the table.

"That's from papa," cried Alida, upon seeing the handwriting. It was addressed to Mr. Lesa.

"Now everything is over," said Hugo, who

had come in also. "You'll find that we'll have to go now, Alida."

The children were quite frightened, for even while they had discussed their departure, none of them had realized how near it really was. Even Jos, who had joined them, made large, bewildered eyes. He had never quite pictured to himself the end of their bliss, and just lately least of all, when he and Hugo had been drawn so closely to each other in friendship. Should this all be over for good now, with their separation?

As soon as the father came in, he took up the letter, only to put it aside again. He only read letters when there was nothing else to do, and supper was more important. When Mrs. Lesa had brought it in and had looked after every one's needs, she asked her husband if she should open the letter. She knew that the children, who had recognized their father's handwriting, were most anxious to hear it. As he willingly agreed, she first read the message to herself. All she told them, however, was that Mr. Thornau would arrive in a few days to fetch his children home. They would hear about the rest the next day. A deep silence followed. Soon the four children quietly stole away from the table, one by one.

They met outside under the large walnut tree according to a previous plan. Here, under the old tree as a staunch witness, they gave each other the solemn promise to do everything in their power to reunite next summer. They longed to spend as perfect a summer together again. When the children had gone to bed and Vinzenz Lesa had lit his pipe, Mrs. Lesa sat down beside him to read aloud Mr. Thornau's letter. He was writing from Dresden, where he had stopped a few days. He had gone there to see Mr. Delrick, who had decided to join him on his trip to Switzerland. This would give him an opportunity personally to bring the parents news about their son. But, as Mr. Thornau's time was extremely limited, he unfortunately would have to take the last train to Leuk on Sunday evening and leave again with the earliest train on Monday. He therefore made them a proposal. If the Lesa family, including their little daughter, would bring his children to Freiburg on Sunday, they could all spend a pleasant day together in that city. As Freiburg was Mr. Lesa's former home, Mr. Thornau had a hope that it was possible to persuade Mr. Lesa to go there. They might arrive early on Sunday

afternoon, and he and Mr. Delrick would meet them at the train, as they expected to reach Freiburg earlier.

In conclusion he said that Mr. Lesa and his wife would, by doing him this favor, crown their former kindness to his children. A refusal of his expectations would mean no less to him than a hailstorm to Mr. Lesa's fields.

Vinzenz Lesa remained silent for quite a while. Then he asked, "Does he write nothing about our boy?"

Mrs. Lesa answered that the only thing about Vinzi was what she had read, namely, that Mr. Delrick was anxious to give them news about the boy in person.

"Do you know why he doesn't want to bring him?" asked Lesa further.

"We can't know that," replied the wife.

"But we can guess, and I'll tell you why. The reason is that Mr. Delrick realizes that he mustn't make him into a travelling musician. He is in no hurry to bring him home, because he has turned his thoughts further than ever from farming and he is afraid to tell me. I know he is a good man, but he has made a mistake. Everybody dislikes admitting such a thing."

Vinzenz Lesa blew such thick clouds of smoke from his pipe that his wife found it advisable to let them disperse a little. Then she said cautiously, "I think we had better hear first what Mr. Delrick has to say. It will be a blessing to be able to talk to him. What do you say about going to Freiburg?"

"I wouldn't think of going," said her husband curtly. "You don't suppose I'll go as far as that for no reason whatever. Why should I go to Freiburg, as if I had nothing else to do?"

"Nobody who knows you could possibly think that," said his wife. "Besides, Mr. Thornau hasn't fixed it on a Sunday for nothing. He knows well enough you wouldn't come during the week. He asks us most politely, and it would have been easy for him to tell any other person to fetch the children home. Apparently, he would value it very much if we took the children to him. I must admit, Vinzenz, that I have grown extremely fond of them. They have both clearly shown me how they hate to leave. I'd love to go and put them into his hands myself."

"Why don't you go with them, then?" he retorted, still showing an obstinate disinclination

in his voice. "You had better go to Freiburg. You are sufficient escort for them."

"No, Vinzenz, I won't do it," answered his wife with firm decision. "You can see from the letter that Mr. Thornau wants you, too. You also know that I couldn't settle with Mr. Delrick what is further to be done about the boy. We'll either go together, or we won't go at all. It is for you to decide."

The silence which followed proved too long for Mrs. Lesa and she began again. "I don't really see why we shouldn't go to Freiburg as long as they ask us to. Don't you remember how delighted we used to be as children when father and mother would take us there on a Sunday? We were the happiest creatures on earth sitting in the high carriage between them with such exciting adventures before us. We really should do it for memory's sake. We always went to church first and heard the beautiful organ. Do you remember how your mother insisted on doing this first of all? Wouldn't it give you pleasure to go back? It also would give you a splendid chance to run over to your farm. You ought to have looked it over long ago, and you are sure to find lots of things to attend to. Now that Jos

is with us, you can leave much more easily than afterward. You'll have a lot of important things to do there, and if nothing special takes you there, you'll never make up your mind to go. You had better take the journey before something actually goes wrong and you might have reason to blame yourself for not having gone before."

The thought that the trip might have a good side had begun to take hold of Vinzenz Lesa. Very deliberately, but still unwillingly, he replied, "How did you think of all these things? I don't see how we could be away so long. It would take at least three days."

"Not for everybody," replied Mrs. Lesa promptly, for she had thought out everything minutely. "We can easily attend to things here on Sunday morning before leaving. We'll be in Freiburg early in the afternoon and that same evening I'll travel home as far as I can with the children, in order to get here as soon as possible on Monday morning."

"How many children do you expect to bring home? The two strangers will have gone and you yourself have only one."

This time the husband had found the words first.

"Only our two, Jos and Stefeli; I don't mean to bring strangers home," his wife said calmly.

"What! You want to take Jos along, too?" said Vinzenz Lesa much excited. "That would make it out of the question for me to go. If Jos isn't home to keep things in order, I won't even budge from here! Count on that."

But Mrs. Lesa began to show him how easily their hired man could look after the simple work in the stable which had to be done on Sunday. Monday morning Jos would be back again. In this way nothing would be neglected. "Just think, Vinzenz," concluded his wife, "what Jos has done for us. He has been with us a long while and we have not done the slightest thing for him. I am sure it would give him pleasure to go along. We owe it only to him if you have time now to look over your other farm to see what has to be done there. You can easily stay away a week, for I promise to look after the farm if I have Jos, so you won't need to grumble."

Vinzenz Lesa was a just man, eager to act upon what he felt to be right. He was glad to give Jos a well-earned holiday and to have the

opportunity besides of carrying out a needful undertaking. After weighing the matter carefully, he finally declared, "All right, we'll go then, but tell Jos about it as soon as possible. He can plan things out beforehand so everything will stay in order while he is gone."

"Tomorrow," said Mrs. Lesa, happy at having such pleasant prospects to tell the children, especially her ever-willing Jos.

At the news of their coming expedition the children showed unbounded delight. Alida and Stefeli jumped from sheer enthusiasm and Hugo said, "Now everything isn't quite over yet. It will be much easier for us to go away if everybody comes along."

Jos could hardly realize the treat that lay before him. It was too wonderful to be taken to Freiburg and see the city and get a glimpse of the fine country on the way. From joy and astonishment he could scarcely say a word. It would be his first journey, for he had never been away from his mountain except when he had come to Leuk.

Sunday arrived. The whole company travelled gaily across the beautiful country which lay gleaming in the brightest sunshine. The trip

proved even more delightful than they had anticipated. Alida and Stefeli never stopped talking, and Hugo kept busy either joining in with them or pointing out the interesting things along the way, which they would have overlooked on account of their constant chatter. Jos, on the contrary, was so absorbed in the new, beautiful things on every side that he never took his eyes from the landscape and remained in the deepest silence, attentively gazing out.

Thus the hours flew by unnoticed. Quite surprised, the children jumped up from their seats when the father said, "Look out, now, we are nearly at Freiburg."

In a few minutes the name was actually called out and the train stopped. Mrs. Lesa looked out of the window expectantly to see if the gentlemen had come to meet them. Sure enough, there they were. But the mother uttered a low sigh. She had hoped till the last moment that Mr. Delrick, as a surprise, had brought their boy with him. But Vinzi wasn't there.

Loud cries of joy beside her drew her attention to the two children, who flung themselves upon their father. Mr. Thornau now held them both in his arms and responded to their stormy

greetings with exclamations of joyous surprise. He held his son a short distance from him and looked at him happily.

"And is this supposed to be my thin, frail Hugo, who had neither spirit nor strength. You look as sunburnt as a woodsman, with your fat cheeks and beaming eyes. Mrs. Lesa," he called to the mother, "what did you do with him? He is a different creature. And is this stalwart gipsy girl really my Alida? The blood throbs through your brown cheeks with health. Mrs. Lesa, Mrs. Lesa, how on earth did you do it?"

"Oh, we know, we know how," cried out the children simultaneously, and immediately began to relate to the father how they had spent their delicious summer days. It would have been impossible for Mrs. Lesa to give any information now.

After greeting her husband, Mr. Delrick took Mrs. Lesa's hand. Just is if he had read from her eyes what was in her heart, he said, "Don't worry about Vinzi, Mrs. Lesa. He is perfectly well, and he is still a great joy to me. The reason why he is not here is not a bad one, you must believe me. Oh, here is my little Stefeli, too, and another old friend besides," he

continued, turning toward the children. "I am glad Jos came, too, for he must belong entirely to your family by now."

"Yes, like our own," said Mrs. Lesa, putting her arms around the boy. "Thank God that we have him."

"I'd like to ask what you think about a plan we made," continued Mr. Delrick. "I wonder what Mr. Lesa will say. Our friend, Mr. Thornau, has asked us all to dinner today at a hotel quite near the beautiful old Nicholas church. So we thought it would be pleasant to go there first of all and then have a nice, quiet time together.

Mrs. Lesa glanced at her husband, for she wanted him to decide. She herself was most anxious to go to the church immediately. Old memories had risen in Vinzenz Lesa's mind as soon as he had set his foot in Freiburg. As a child he had known nothing more wonderful than to drive to Freiburg on a Sunday, and his little girl neighbor had felt the same. He had always loved to enter the tall, quiet church holding his mother's hand. Whenever he heard the sounds of the wonderful organ, they revealed to him

a different world, one quite apart from his daily life.

"I'd be only too glad to go to church first," he began. "It is but suitable that we should go, as it is Sunday today."

At this the little company started off into the town. It was very still in the large old church, and so dark and solemn that the children stepped very lightly before settling down beside their parents. Suddenly the organ began to play, and rich, powerful tones floated through the quiet building. It seemed as if all the heavenly hosts were singing a hymn of praise and joy for all the world.

Stefeli uttered a low cry and violently pulled her mother's sleeve. "It is Vinzi, mother," she said in intense excitement. The mother also had recognized her boy's curly head at her first glance toward the organ. It had so surprised and overcome her that she could barely keep from sobbing aloud.

She wanted her husband to share her deep emotion. Quietly touching him, she whispered, "Vinzenz, it is Vinzi."

He gave no reply, nor looked up, seemingly unwilling to show he had been moved. The music

suddenly changed. From a low plaint it swelled to a tremendous wail, is if a chorus of despairing creatures were cast down by sorrow and contrition. In the midst of this, their grief reached its height and changed into meek, ardent entreaties for help and mercy. At that moment the heavens seemed to open and a clear, lovely chant of angels brought down a message of love and eternal joy. Just in the middle of the angels' choir, a rich, clear voice rang out and filled the church with the words:

"And the blessed song of mercy— "

Jos, upon hearing the well-known sounds, so much more glorious and inspiring than he had ever imagined them, had been completely carried away. At the ending where he had always joined in he could not stop himself from lustily singing his words to the chorus of angels.

When the last tone faded away a deep silence reigned in the church. After a while both gentlemen rose. Vinzenz Lesa also got up, but he had been obliged to wipe his eyes a number of times.

"How can you believe such a thing," he said to his wife in a hoarse voice in answer to the

words she had whispered to him. "No one can tell me that was Vinzi."

Mr. Delrick stood immediately behind him. "Mr. Lesa," he said, patting him on the shoulder, "we don't need to believe anything till we have gone to the organ to see for ourselves."

"He can certainly play, I know that," said Mr. Thornau satisfied. "How did you like it, Alida?"

"Oh, it was wonderful and I wish it were not over yet."

"Come, let us go along, too. I'd love to see who played," and taking his daughter's hand, Mr. Thornau followed the others up to the organ loft. Mr. Delrick had quickly gone ahead, and before the others had arrived, the same joyful melody greeted them again. Vinzenz Lesa, upon entering, stood stock still. At the organ really sat his curly-headed boy. As he was playing, the father could actually hear how he produced those stirring melodies. Nothing helped now, and Lesa had to wipe his eyes repeatedly.

Vinzi had ceased, and his mother finally let Stefeli's hand go. The child rushed to her brother and tenderly clung to him. Now the father came up with Mr. Delrick.

"Mr. Lesa," he said, "your son has played you the song of mercy, and I hope you will also be merciful and forgive him if he does not want to become a farmer."

Lesa had grasped his son's hand. "More than that, more than that, Vinzi," he finally said after a great effort to control himself. "You make your parents proud of you and not what I used to think. I never realized such a thing could happen. I never, never knew it. When I used to come to Freiburg as a boy and heard this organ, I thought that people who played it were creatures entirely set apart, not human beings like one of us. You must be most thankful to Mr. Delrick, boy, for we owe him everything. He found the way for you and made this possible."

"Not I, Mr. Lesa, not I," Mr. Delrick remonstrated. "Pater Silvanus is the one who knew what was in Vinzi and who knew what ought to be done with him. Let us be grateful to him. You shall also know right away that Vinzi is not losing time with a breadless art. He already has an offer from a church in Dresden to play every Sunday. I suppose you approve of that, Mr. Lesa? He'll be able to keep on study-

ing at the same time and I think the longer the better. I hope it will suit you to leave him with me for a few more years."

" Whatever you deem wise, sir," Lesa replied unhesitatingly, perfectly convinced that Mr. Delrick's plans and his would evermore agree. Vinzenz Lesa was pleased that his friend had kept a long silence about Vinzi, until he could really prove his case.

One surprise after another was in store for Vinzi. When Jos suddenly stepped up to him, Vinzi greeted his old friend with the greatest joy.

" So it was you, after all! " he exclaimed. "I heard you singing down in the church and it nearly upset me. I had to think over and over again: ' Who knows our song and has a voice just like Jos's? ' But I thought you couldn't be here, and here you are, after all." In the greatest surprise he greeted Alida, Hugo and Mr. Thornau. Alida found so many things to talk over with Vinzi about their past and future that Mr. Thornau found it wise to announce that the moment for dinner had arrived. Then all their conversations could be continued at leisure.

However much Mr. Lesa fought against it, he was taken to dinner at the Zohringer Hotel,

where he had not set his foot in his life before. Unfortunately the hour of parting came much too soon for them all.

"You don't know what I have to thank you for," said Mr. Thornau to Vinzenz Lesa at leave-taking. "My son, who never has shown the slightest inclination nor wish for any occupation, has just informed me that he has decided to become a landowner. After having already chosen the manager for his estate, he insists on getting all his cows from you. He says you have the finest that can be found anywhere, and he knows all about the breed. My daughter has been fighting against studying music for over a year and has not once opened her beautiful piano in spite of all my remonstrances. Now she declares to me that it is her highest wish to take up her lessons again. Hearing her former pupil play so beautifully makes her ambitious to work hard and catch up with him. I really mean it most seriously, Mr. Lesa, when I say that my gratitude for everything that my children have experienced in your house is much greater than I can say. I would love to prove it to you. Don't you ever expect to get to Hamburg, Mr. Lesa?"

"No, I don't believe so," said the latter truthfully. "But we are glad if the children have profited somewhat. We liked to have them and would like them to come again."

Mr. Thornau pressed Mrs. Lesa's hand most gratefully, for his children had told him so much about her that he knew she had been a real mother to them. "Will you let the children come back again?" he asked sincerely.

"It would make me quite unhappy if they didn't come next summer," she said half sadly, half happily, "and I'll look forward to their coming every summer."

Upon taking leave of Mr. Lesa, Mr. Delrick told him that they would see each other again, as he was planning to spend Vinzi's holidays in Leuk. But first he intended to go to the Simplon in order to show Pater Silvanus how his pupil had progressed. If the father had no objection he would take Vinzi with him. Lesa replied that Mr. Delrick should do whatever he thought best.

Vinzi, who was standing beside them, listened breathlessly. What had his father said? How could he say this when he had forbidden him so emphatically to go back to the mountain?

Anxious to know the truth, he asked a little

timidly, " Father, can I really go to the mountain with Mr. Delrick? "

" You may do whatever Mr. Delrick says," replied the father.

Vinzi's eyes sparkled with delight. He was to return to the mountain in a few days and see every one he had loved so dearly. He would be able to thank Pater Silvanus, as he fully realized how much he had to be grateful for.

That same hour all separated. The children found it quite impossible to get done with their leave-taking. Whenever they seemed to have finished, they began again. But they were far from sad, as they had the sure prospect of meeting again next summer. Vinzi was to be with them also, as Mr. Delrick had promised to come to Leuk at the beginning of his holidays. Mr. Thornau travelled in the direction of Basle, and Vinzenz Lesa toward Bulle, near his paternal home. Mr. Delrick and Mrs. Lesa, with the three children, journeyed toward Lausanne on the lake of Geneva. Here they spent the night in order to arrive home as soon as possible the next morning.

On the evening of the following day Vinzi went upstairs with his mother. When they came

to his little room, he said to her. "Oh, mother, it is so lovely to be at home again; won't you please come in and say good-night to me the way you used to do?"

Before going to bed that night Stefeli had run outside, as if looking for some one. She found Mr. Delrick sitting on the bench as usual, just as she had expected.

"When you go to the mountain, Mr. Delrick, will you give somebody a message from me?" she inquired, as soon as she had joined him.

After expressing his readiness to do so, Stefeli went on: "Won't you please tell Uncle Lorenz that Jos mustn't go home yet. He promised to leave him here till father sends him away, and I know that he'll never do that."

Mr. Delrick promised faithfully to deliver her message. He could not help smiling to himself when he remembered how similar were the three messages he was asked to take. Mr. Lesa had begged his cousin Lorenz to leave Jos with him, if possible, as he could hardly live without the boy. A few moments later Jos had appeared, very anxious to let his father know that he could not yet come home. So much had still to be done before the winter, and then spring would be here

again. This year's work could barely be finished before next year's labors would begin. His Uncle Vinzenz should really not be left alone, for it was settled now that Vinzi would stay away for good. Mr. Delrick said to himself with a smile that Cousin Lorenz would not be able to gainsay this threefold request, especially against his own firm promise.

Mrs. Lesa went into Vinzi's room and sat down on his bed. This vividly brought back to her the dreadful evening before he had departed for the Simplon. It was the first time Vinzi had been left alone with his mother since his return. He began to pour out his heart to her and told her all about his life in Dresden. He had not written, because his father had said that it was no good. He could not relate enough of Mr. Delrick's fatherly kindness to him in every way. Vinzi was allowed to study many things, especially music. One splendid teacher taught him to play the organ and the other gave him instructions in the laws of music. From the latter he had learned to understand these and all their marvels. This lesson had been a great joy to him and he had been impatient for it every time.

" But my organ lesson was better yet," Vinzi

added. "Oh, mother, I never realized one could look forward so much to anything. It was always like a great feast to me."

With boundless happiness the mother looked at the radiant eyes of her boy. "And isn't it part of your happiness, Vinzi, to live with Mr. Delrick? It must be wonderful to belong to his home and be with him so much!" she inquired.

"Yes, and not a small part of it either," he cried out. "I am glad you know him, otherwise you could have no idea how kind, affectionate and helpful he is. Everybody in his house is good to me, too, for his sake. Mrs. Wyneken, his housekeeper, who has charge of everything, is as kind to me as if she were my grandmother. Frederick the butler, and Minnie, the maid, both wait on me and won't let me do anything for myself. It is mostly because they all love to hear me play the organ. Mrs. Wyneken says that Mr. Delrick has grown happy again since I play it. He had lost every one in the world he loved and had been very sad. He has a little organ in a large room downstairs. Mr. Delrick asks me to play it for him every night. Sometimes we can hardly stop. Now you know what my life in Dresden is like. But I cannot say how much

I look forward to my little hayloft on the mountain under the stars."

"Vinzi," said the mother, "do you ever thank God for all the blessings He has heaped upon you. Do you realize that it is He who has given you everything?"

"Yes, I do, mother," he replied, looking frankly into her eyes. "I never forget how frightened and troubled I often was. Sometimes we sing one of the songs you taught me in the evening, but I sing them quite differently now. I used only to enjoy the tune, but now I thank and praise God from the bottom of my heart."

"If you should ever get into a difficult position, Vinzi," the mother concluded, "you must remember that God often means to work out our good when we fear evil. When I sat on this bed before you went away the first time, I should in my shortsightedness have done everything to keep you home. And just think! That journey proved the beginning of your great happiness."

Vinzi had listened attentively. "It was the same with me," he said. "I thought it was the most dreadful thing that could happen to me and

it proved just the opposite. I'll always remember that, mother."

When the mother left Vinzi's chamber after a hearty good-night, her heart was filled with gratitude and bliss. Folding her hands she sent up a heartfelt prayer of thanks to Heaven.

What blessings God had sent to her and her household. Her boy's inmost wish had been fulfilled and his future lay clearly before him. The father was not only satisfied, but actually pleased. He did not despise his Vinzi any more, because he realized that he could be truly proud of the boy and he showed it quite openly in the way he looked at him.

Vinzi had been away a long while and had lived in totally different surroundings. He had learned a great deal, but had remained just as affectionate and simple as when he had gone away. This made his mother extremely happy, and she sent a fervent prayer to God to keep him pious and childlike upon all the paths of his coming life.

THE END